

A Beautiful Success:

*The Fabulous Adventure of
Clarins*

Jacques Courtin
Translation by Shari
Leslie Segall

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Introduction

"Do more, do better, enjoy what you do."

Empty hands and empty pockets.

Along with medical school cut short by the war and incomplete studies, this is the story of Jacques Courtin. The story of how in 50 years he created an empire out of thin air-accomplishing in one lifetime, in one single generation, what others have taken centuries to do. Of how without a cent to his name, he triggered one of France's greatest business achievements, invented the methods and products of today's cosmetology, gave to beauty its credibility, and positioned the brand he founded at the forefront of the beauty-care industry in his native land and in virtually the entire world, with 6,000 employees in 157 countries.

The Clarins story is a story about success as well as the subject of this book. It is a story, which starts out simply, in an ordinary family, building to a crescendo, with success rooted first in water, then in air, then in plants... finally blossoming into a brand now known, recognized and esteemed throughout the world.

There is a hero in this unique story, a model for budding entrepreneurs everywhere. His name is Jacques Courtin.

Our discreet and modest hero set off in life with three admirable capabilities (listening to others, putting himself in their place and enjoying helping others whilst asking for nothing in return), with a motto ("Do more, do better, enjoy what you do.") and with some excellent ideas.

The French industrialist and investor, Vincent Bolloré, said the following of Jacques Courtin: "Single-handedly, he achieved what it took my family seven generations to do. Alain Ferri, president of the stockbrokers' trade association, applauded Clarins's financial feat of "jumping from a 250 million-franc turnover in 1984, the year of its IPO, to a billion euros in 2004. In 20 years the turnover multiplied by 38. That is unparalleled in France and maybe even in the world." His competitors have also praised him. "Each of us is strong in one or two areas. Jacques Courtin became strong in everything." As for women, they have remained faithful to him for the past five decades.

The Clarins story is a story about a man who knows how to listen, a man who has devoted his life to putting himself in other people's shoes especially women to better understand and give them what they want. A man who thinks that succeeding in the world of beauty care, as in that of health, means asking for nothing in return: "What is more noble, more exciting, than nurturing the beauty of women?"

Jacques Courtin scours scientific journals and works his researchers to the point of exhaustion. "If I have a product idea in mind, I want to take it all the way, regardless of how or for how much. For the Age Control Hand Lotion, I wanted an invisible beauty-glove. I tested 151 versions. The 152nd was the right one and still is to this day-we haven't been able to improve upon it yet. It was formulated in 1977." He deepens his knowledge to better share it with others: "I would like to reveal what I know and what I've been able to observe over the years to all women. To help them take better care of their faces and their bodies: their beauty. Beauty isn't trivial. When taken seriously, it's a form of therapy-even doctors admit that today.

If I can impart to women a little of what I know, my life will have

served a purpose." He thus has helped elevate beauty to its rightful place: "At first, doctors resisted the idea of beauty as therapy. They didn't want to talk about it. Now, surely thanks to Clarins, doctors themselves recommend professional beauty care for their patients—even in hospitals."

He reads as many newspapers as he can, notably financial publications. "I'm more interested in the choices people make in life rather than in their fortunes. I've always preferred words to numbers. I'm told that my stock has multiplied by 38. I'm very flattered, but at the end of the day, what does that change in my life? However, I'm happy that because of me, those who believed in me and bought my shares are richer today. I can't count the number of people who say to me 'I should call my vacation home Clarins'. That touches me deeply."

He responds with a smile to talk of his achievements. "Despite its immense success, Clarins has failed: thinking of only my faithful customers is not enough. What about all those I've not yet won over? That's my failure. When you offer the best products in the world, available to a majority of women, you need to go out and conquer—and earn every one of those women, who is not yet a client.

Therein may lie the secret of Jacques Courtin's success. Nothing is ever a given. Everything remains to be earned, and proved.

Jacques Courtin knows himself well. He is his own harshest critic and is always seeking to improve.

In 2004, he celebrated the 50th anniversary of the brand he founded and for the first time, the man who spent his life listening to others finally accepted to speak about himself.

This book tells the story of a fascinating life, a marvelous adventure as well as an extraordinary success.

Fifty years of memories, gathered and noted, but never published. Here, as with everything, Jacques Courtin tells nothing but the truth, even if it sometimes sounds like a beautiful fairy tale.

Ellen Willer

I

The Beginnings

1.

"The key to success is simple: just listen to women, and give them what they ask for."

It is a few minutes past 5 o'clock in the afternoon on Rue de Crimée in the working-class 19th district of Paris. On the radio, between bursts of static, Maurice Chevalier is belting out the refrain of his huge hit "Le chapeau de Zozo" (Zozo's hat): "Have you seen Zozo's pretty hat?" he asks with expressive energy, rolling his Rs like the crooners of the time, "It's a hat, a funny hat".

Night is falling on this early spring day. Jacques is seated comfortably in the living room amid bustling young women.

He is nine years old and is doing his homework at the dining table while his older sister Geneviève entertains her friends Mathilde, Andrée and Georgette.

He is trying to concentrate on his history lesson but cannot help listening to the girls' talk. He likes their breezy chatter, muffled giggles and secret whispers. Well into their teenage years, the discussion sometimes broaches the subject of the neighborhood

boys.

Well behaved and discrete, Jacques is allowed to sit in on these meetings because he is still a little boy. The girls do not include him in their discussions he is far too young for that - but they don't mind talking in front of him either.

Within the lively conversations, each girl's despair is more pronounced than the last:

"I've gained 5 pounds," one of them complains.

"What about me? Look at this chest! No boy will even look at me. Who'd pay attention to a girl with such small breasts?"

"I'd rather have that," says the third. "I refuse to run in gym class, my breasts are so heavy. The teacher's threatening to tell my parents-I couldn't care less."

Although Jacques wants to get back to studying, it is difficult to tear himself away from what he's hearing. He hopes there will be no quiz the next day. What mark would he get? On top of that, Tuesday is "dictation" day. He frowns involuntarily. Dictation is his pet hate. His heart sinks at the thought. Since the beginning of the year, he has had nothing but zeros in dictation. His father, the purchasing director of a company that manufactures lifting devices, is a good and learned man he will, as usual, be understanding and indulgent with his son...

His father is also a talented poet, his works delighting family and friends. Young Jacques loves to hear him read his verse, especially "The Mosquito," whose rhythm and humor Jacques remembers to this day:

The rascal pulls me from deep sleep

back;
His trumpet blares in one ear,
Then in the other - mad, I fear
The more I shoo him, the harder he'll
attack

Feeling him onto my forehand float,
With Homeric swat I think I've
squashed him here.
But alas! Again far back into my ear
His trumpet plays that too familiar
note.

He stings my neck, I shake the cot,
Turn on the light but see him not...
Then wanting to go back to dreaming

But with his damned song still
a'streaming
I hear myself shout to this tease:
"Come eat me up, but Quiet, Please!"

"I adored my father," remembers Jacques Courtin. "He was a perfect mix of tenderness and irony, and he was blessed with an extraordinary sense of humor. One day when I was quite young, we were all at a family funeral. After the ceremony the traditional bottle of champagne was being uncorked (the deceased would have approved), when all of a sudden, BANG!-the cork hit my father on the forehead. With a straight face, he said, 'Oh, no-please! One Courtin is enough for today!' How we laughed-in spite of our grief! The tension in the room dissolved."



Mr. Courtin was indeed indulgent with his son, but it was obvious that Jacques's poor grades worried him. For this former seminarian who had studied Greek and Latin, his son's low marks in French were a tough cross to bear, but what was there to do?

Although alert and industrious, Jacques could not spell to save his life. All those rules and all those exceptions just would not stick. To say the least, that is not where young Jack's talents lie (and years later, he discovered that his condition is called "dyslexia"). Science, however, fascinated him, especially biology, the body, the muscles... He was completely absorbed in even the smallest detail of the wonders of nature.

On the radio, a crooner purrs out a love song-and Jacques is drawn back into the girls' intriguing conversation "

Look at this photo. Marlene Dietrich-now that's what I call chic! Have you seen her figure? She can wear anything. Everything looks great on her. And those legs! Toned, tapered. As for me, it's simple: when we visit my grandma this year in Hauteville-I've already told my mother-I'm not going near a bathing suit!"

"So how will you swim in the ocean?"

"I won't. That's how."

"Gee, that's a shame."

"True. But I'll do anything to keep my thighs covered up they're so fat!"

Jacques stays quiet, and listens: the beginnings of a lifelong practice of listening to women, to their needs, trying to understand them... and, if possible, making them come true.

A lifework is born.



For the time being, Madame Courtin has appeared with a freshly baked cake.

"Snack time, children! Any later and you won't be hungry for dinner. Who wants some?"

Jacques shoots out his hand to take the thick slice his mother has cut for him as, in unison, a chorus of very polite "No, thanks." floats over the table in a loud, collective sigh.

"You don't want any?" Madame Courtin asks. "You're not hungry? Or don't you like pound cake?"

"That's not it," Geneviève explains. "We're watching our figures."

"Your figures? What figures?"

"Our figures, mama. We want to stay thin."

"Thin? What kind of idea is this? Everyone's made the way nature sees fit-and that's that!"

"You don't understand anything, mama. Today it's so hard to be fashionable that tomboy look, those skinny bodies..."

"Besides that, Madame, I'd like to get even thinner. I don't think pound cake is a good idea-too much butter."

"And sugar," Geneviève adds. "A friend of mine gave me an article about that...all the latest findings about food."

"Pound cake without butter and sugar? Now that's a novel idea! Come on, don't be silly. You'll have plenty of time for this nonsense later on. You're still young at your age you have to eat right."



Young? That's true, Jacques thinks. They are young. If they had not gone out of their way to point out their defects, he is not sure he would even have noticed them.

They are nothing like mama's good friends-the plump ladies she has known since her seamstress days, and who are not afraid of eating. Reputed for her excellent taste, Madame Courtin often helps them when they come for her expert advice on dresses they would like to have made. Out of their huge leather sacks, which look more like shopping bags than handbags, they produce the fashion magazine pages, which will help them in their choice.

Jacques has always been surprised at the vast difference between the models in the pictures (paper-thin, delicate figures) and the women in his living room (full, round, large as life figures).

He always thinks the former are as tall and thin as they come, and the latter, well, just the opposite, he says to himself with a smile. How funny women are! How can these women hope to fit into such narrow dresses? Can't they see themselves as they are?

So that's the way it works, he muses. Some women, already almost perfect, obsess about their slightest flaw. Others, less favored by nature, delude themselves into thinking that they are flawless!

In any case, judging from their discussions, all women seem to care about their appearance to a significant extent. But why, wonders young Jacques. Why? Why is what they look like so important? Why do they starve themselves and subject themselves to such discipline?

Whom are they doing this for? Maybe he finally realizes-maybe it's simply to please others. Women like to please. That is the answer. Beautiful or not, thin or not, tall or not, all women like to please...

In the living room, the delicious aroma of pound cake is still

drifting through the air; Madame Courtin has not had her last word.

"You'll have plenty of time to worry about these things," she continues, cutting more slices of cake.

"Time? Not really, mama-the holidays are almost here. Can you imagine me on Bénodet beach in a bathing suit with this extra weight? I have just about two months to get rid of it..."

"I'm not talking about months, Geneviève, but years! Come on, now-forget about all this. A little piece of cake won't hurt you. And if you want to stay trim, do some exercise."

Exercise. The word has been spoken.

The young girls turn to their plates half-heartedly. They pick, they nibble, never really daring to enjoy their snack. However, Madame Courtin's words have not fallen on deaf ears.

That evening after dinner, in the magazine rack near the sofa, Jacques finds what he has been looking for: Marcel Rouet's exercise manual, with hundreds of movements explained and illustrated. He takes it to his room, studies it...and does so for countless evenings thereafter.

From that moment on, every day, with unwavering regularity, he listens to his sister and her friends. Every day he listens to their complaints and their hopes. He continues to learn that Georgette's main concern is her weight; Mathilde, her heavy breasts; Andrée, her shapeless legs.

Each girl is unhappy with her body, they all think they lack in appeal, and above all, they have a tendency to overreact. Jacques, meanwhile, does not share their point of view. He not only fails to see what they are seeing, he finds them perfect! It does not occur to him to say so; all he does is file their words in the back of his mind and look for a way to help them.

As a first step, he patiently consults every detail of Marcel Rouet's book-so thoroughly that he winds up knowing some pages of it by

heart.



One evening as the girls, just home from school, take their places at the table for the usual routine, a wad of notepaper falls to the floor as Jacques is emptying his schoolbag.

"What's that?" his sister asks.

"What's what?"

"Those drawings."

"They're just...diagrams."

"Of what? Show me."

Jacques offers up the pages. Geneviève seems surprised.

"These are sketches of women-gym moves. Did you draw these?"

"Actually, I traced them."

"Even so, they're not bad. Hey, girls, what do you think of these?"

"They're well done," Georgette says. "You can really see how to do the exercises."

"Why did you do these?"

Jacques blushes. Having to explain himself is a small detail he had not thought of. Conversation does not come easily to him--especially with such a daunting group of young ladies. He dives in all the same:

"Well, I've heard you all complain about parts of your bodies. I've been carefully studying Marcel Rouet's book and I've chosen for

each of you some exercises to help improve things."

"You did this all by yourself?"

"Who could I have done it with?" Jacques snaps, blushing further.

"Well done, Jacques!"

The girls cannot get over it. Jacques has drafted an instruction sheet for each of them, with their names in the upper right-hand corner and their recommended exercises in splendid detail. They laugh joyfully, cheeks flushed with excitement, eyes aglow with glee. Showing each other their pages, they exchange impressions, even trying a movement or two then and there. The boy happily helps them, correcting a position, improving a posture, straightening a line.



Jacques had finally found his role among them: among these young women and among women in general. Most importantly, the young Jacques Courtin had unknowingly just discovered his path in life.

In this first part of the 20th century, war was barely on the horizon and no one could have imagined the pain and desolation it was to bring. For Jacques, it meant anguish and sacrifice. He decided to put his medical knowledge to use at the hospital: so many broken bodies, weakened limbs, damaged muscles...

At the end of this sad time, he knew more than ever that he wanted to dedicate his life to beauty, well-being, and health.

Nevertheless, what he could not yet know is that, with unflagging consistency and convictions, and thanks to his innermost beliefs and everything he had already learned in his very young life, he was getting closer and closer to giving beauty its credibility.

2.

"Taking beauty seriously, giving it its credibility."

By the end of 1945, the hospital is somewhat back to normal. As the ravages of war give way to the damages of everyday life, the wounded diminish in number, gradually replaced by the sick.

Like every morning, Jacques Courtin and a physician enter a patient's room. The doctor asks for silence, then in a strong voice shares his satisfaction with the students crowded around him. "You remember the case of this young woman. You remember the problem she had with her shoulder. I showed you her x-rays last week. Well, two days ago, we operated. Show us, please, ma'am. Do you see? The scar is still bandaged. Soon she'll be able to use her arm again, and move her shoulder. Isn't that right, ma'am?"

When the doctor turns toward the patient, he sees that she is in tears. Awkwardly, she tries to hold back her sobs, to make as little noise as possible.

"What is it, ma'am? Are you in pain?"

The woman has trouble catching her breath. Under her thin nightshirt, a long bandage almost runs from her neck to her elbow. Still novices, the medical students say nothing as the doctor tries to be sympathetic. "Don't worry the pain will gradually lessen. Ten

days at the most and you'll be home. And don't forget how lucky you are. A couple more weeks and you would have lost the use of the arm. You should be happy!"

T

he woman struggles to respond. "Of course I'm happy, doctor, but..."

"But you're in pain, right?"

"Of course I'm in pain but that's not why I'm crying. The pain will pass and I can stand it. But..." "

But?"

"But...the nurse told me my shoulder will be deformed for life. Is that true?"

"It's possible. Well...I mean...there's a risk that..."

"A risk?" asks the patient with a glimmer of hope.

"Let's just say that in cases like yours we let nature take its course. And it does happen that the shoulder remains deformed."

"But-how am I to get dressed? What about my sleeveless dresses and bathing suits? What about men? Who'd want me like this?"

The doctor is taken aback, almost annoyed. Glancing at his student audience, he declares, "You mean to tell me I just saved the use of your arm and you're crying because it'll be deformed? Is that it?"

"Yes, doctor. Exactly..."

"How can you even think of something like that?"

The students gather around their teacher. Jacques remains at a distance. The patient starts sobbing again, more violently this time.

The little group leaves the room. Jacques stays behind to comfort the woman.



"Women patients were devastated," admits Jacques Courtin, "because doctors didn't take the trouble to address their esthetic concerns. Some patients refused to be operated on even when that meant risking their life or agreed, but fell into deep depression afterwards. When they complained, 'You never told me I'd have such a big scar,' the doctors either didn't even answer, or said it was inevitable..."

At the time, the medical profession didn't worry about such matters. It wasn't that long ago when an appendectomy left you with a stomach-wide scar-and you never wore a bikini again. The same happened with a caesarean. Today's incisions are mere buttonholes; just a few centimeters are needed."

Surgery has come a long way but the true evolution was seen in mentalities. Jacques Courtin was ahead of his time.

"I quickly understood how crucial this was. In childhood, I became aware of the importance of beauty, primarily through my sister Geneviève and her friends. They were so concerned with the way they looked always trying this diet, or that. It was their first priority.

"I couldn't understand why no one was paying attention to these worries patients had, how you could tell a woman her deformed arm didn't matter as long as she could still use it. You had to put yourself in her place to understand and doctors didn't do things that way. If she was in physical pain, they could help. If the pain was emotional, if her suffering was related to the way she looked, they didn't pay attention. It wasn't up to the doctor to say whether that was important or not! It's true that as far as the surgery went, the doctor had done a good job, but that didn't mean his mission was totally accomplished. There was a demand-a concrete, serious need that still had to be taken care of.

"Well, if the field of medicine didn't go any further, I told myself, I had to take over from there."



This is how Jacques Courtin turned to post-operative rehabilitation.

"I wanted to bring together all the techniques needed for both functional and esthetic recovery-in other words, build a bridge between medicine and beauty, between the scientific and the esthetic. For me, the pursuit of beauty was not a trivial goal. But I had to struggle to have my ideas accepted."

To doctors of the time, the world of beauty treatments hopes-to say nothing of loose morals. They did not want was one of charlatans, of false promises and dashed to hear about it. They would shrug their shoulders and walk away.

"In a way it's understandable" Jacques Courtin continues. "Back then, a sign on a door saying 'Esthetic Treatments' or 'Massage' could very well mean house of ill repute. The people who worked in salons d'esthétique weren't necessarily the most professional in the world. Therefore, the medical profession wound up rejecting indeed, condemning anything to do with beauty care. Worrying about physical appearance was beneath them. I remember what one endocrinology professor said about a friend of mine: 'What a shame that he's lowered himself to dispensing esthetic care-he was my most brilliant student.' That gives you an idea of how the field was judged."



As for beauty products, physicians saw them as cons. "I remember one patient who had some face cream on her night table. The doctor asked the nurse to remove it. As far as he was concerned, that jar did not belong in a hospital, where the only thing that mattered was physical health. Today, a doctor seeing it there would be glad. He'd know it gave his patient pleasure, relief-a sure-fire way to get well faster."

This helped beauty care to become mainstream, more accepted and better understood:

"My great challenge was having the beauty industry taken seriously-in every aspect: no exaggerated promises, no gadgets, no worthless treatments, and no overpricing; just real efficiency-at all times. That spirit opened the way for a whole new generation of beauty products, beauty being taken seriously. I remember a discussion I had years later with the director of the Christian Dior brand, Maurice Roger. He was jokingly complaining, 'Monsieur Courtin, these products that you're launching-you're always one step ahead of us.' Then he sighed, 'I have to admit one thing: you're the man who's given beauty its credibility. Keep going!' Let's just say I saw the light earlier than some other people. I was taken by what women were asking for. I had to respond. I saw a path and followed it."



During the early post-war years, if the beauty-care industry had a bad reputation, esthetic surgery was downright demonized. The same went for weight-loss doctors but that was sometimes justified. In the 1950s, the doctor who introduced plastic surgery in France was called before the national medical-board.

"It must be said that there were in fact some abuses," explains Jacques Courtin. "But that was inevitable, since esthetic care was not a recognized field and was not regulated. However, that doesn't mean there wasn't a need: a need for treatments and a need for information. A reputed esthetician once told me, 'The first thing I do with a new customer is thoroughly cleanse her face with soap and water. With that small gesture alone you see immediate improvement.' Women were rejecting face soap; they were cleansing with only make-up remover. Imagine doing the same thing for your body-'taking a shower' with make-up remover. It wouldn't be long before you went back to soap. Soap isn't the culprit; not rinsing well is the problem. Soap is indispensable. You just have to make sure you know the right way to rinse."

Women were ill informed. Most of them acted against their own good judgment.

"They had not been educated about beauty-care products and treatments. They had problems with their busts but were not really aware of what to do. They thought the human body could be compressed and packed their chests and hips into tight girdles without realizing that if you squeeze one area, the bulk necessarily transfers to another. You're not compressing, you're simply dislodging any rolls of fat to the inside of your thighs. The only things that truly compress are the blood vessels and then you wind up with circulation problems! But it wasn't their fault. We were in the middle of a revolution-and women needed time to get used to it. For a long time, fashion had sought to change the female figure, with girdles, corsets, crinolines, and dress bustles. The image of a fully dressed woman, her waist strangled by a corset, was once considered even more beautiful than that of a nude. No one cared a whit about what all this was doing to the body, which wound up bruised, deformed-made sometimes completely ugly. In fact, the body per se wasn't even acknowledged. At the beach, changing-rooms were as close to the ocean as possible: out of the changing room, into the water! Anyway, what were women changing into? Oversized bathing suits, to hide their curves from invasive eyes. "Then, all of a sudden, the body started to be celebrated. That's the revolution I was part of!"



"In my first beauty clinic, we treated esthetic problems related to health conditions: scars, burns, edema, and sores. The more women we helped, the more I realized how vitally significant beauty is to happiness, self-confidence, life itself! Women want to be beautiful; that's very touching. That's normal. Beauty has unquestionable effects on health. Today, doctors have completely changed their mind: they realize that beauty can have a positive impact on healing. This is a complete turn-around in attitudes from not that long ago. But it's actually the beauty industry itself that has

changed directions and that's why so many doctors now specialize in esthetic medicine. No more exaggerated promises! Beauty has proven itself worthy of being taken seriously. It contributes to happiness, health and wellbeing. Doctors are now often the first ones to call for the hospital beautician-especially for seriously ill patients, who desperately need to feel they haven't lost their appeal."

"That women, and their doctors, have such faith in the power of beauty has only reinforced our role: to be there when women need us-at all times, of course, but especially when their self-confidence wanes, and they feel vulnerable."



Jacques Courtin is well able to imagine what he can do for women but experience shows that even more is expected of him.

"Certain women went as far as telling me that I was the only one who understood them and that was only because I stopped to listen to what they had to say. It's unfair, I know, but some of them thanked me almost as much as they did their surgeons. Recovery helps you forget. You forget your illness, your pain and your worry. What does stay with you are the physical aftereffects the scars. Once the illness itself was taken care of, once the operation was out of the way, these women became obsessed with the effects on their appearance. I specialized in their concerns. Listening closely to what they needed and wanted took precedence over everything. Listening. Thinking. Acting.

"My company was built based on this."



Jacques Courtin listens to women. This is already his guiding principle. He often hears their regrets and complaints. Not much has changed, in fact, from the days of the living room table on Rue

de Crimée: these women, too, are unsatisfied with their appearance. However, once he has accomplished the job for which they first consulted him once physical function is restored and related esthetic concerns are treated-they pour forth the rest of their worries:

"Given the positive results, they wanted me to treat completely different problems. 'I know I came for the edema on my calf. But if you could fix that up so well, couldn't you do something for these flabby thighs?' I started with what was serious and difficult. I continued with what was purely beautiful. But I have to say that it was the women themselves who led me to recognize the vital importance of beauty. All I did was listen and follow."

Women speak to him. About all their troubles: their weight, their shape, their general appearance. Little by little, aided by physicians and honest, serious commitment, Jacques tackles each of their concerns.

3.

"Always be open, attentive, curious, and you'll seize your chance."

Autumn 1946. The privileged few lucky enough to get away to the seashore tell Jacques Courtin about their vacations. He cannot help noticing a common thread in some of the stories: several women have seen an improvement in their breasts during their seaside stays. "I don't know why, but when I'm on vacation, my chest is firmer, higher, more beautiful..."

Jacques Courtin is fascinated by this.

He chooses his questions carefully: "What do you do differently when you're away?" Very quickly, two patterns emerge. First and foremost, the women admit to freeing their breasts from constricting clothing on vacation, they often wear looser garments and no bras. For Jacques Courtin, this fits perfectly with a recent observation: "At the hospital I treated a lot of fractures. Not only does an arm stuck for weeks or months in a bandage or sling lose muscle, but its skin peels becomes thinner and more fragile. So what about that other "bandage", the brassiere, which tightly squashes a woman's breasts not just for weeks or months but a lifetime?"

His questions continue: "How long have you worn a bra? More importantly, when don't you wear one? Does it leave marks on your

skin? Is your skin thinner where the bra covers it?"

The women are happy to answer. Some say they go braless in summer. Others note that not wearing a bra forces them to pay more attention to good posture. In addition, there are those who admit how much they love to swim with their breasts floating freely.

From their responses, Jacques Courtin draws an indisputable conclusion: breasts should not be confined in an excessively tight brassiere.

"In French, the word for brassiere is soutien-gorge. This means 'bosom-support' and that was just my point: it is meant to support the breasts, not to compress them. A good brassiere should leave no marks-not on the breasts, and especially not on the ribcage or the shoulders. A mark on the shoulder near the bra strap means the breast has moved; it's no longer just 'supported,' it has been lifted and moved. What's more, trapped in this tight little space continuously immobilized in the same position-some areas of the skin, which covers the breast rub against the bra's fabric, but others are not touched by the fabric at all. Now let us not forget that while friction wears out inert material, it strengthens living matter. Look at the palm of your hand or the sole of your foot: people who do manual labor or walk barefoot have thick, often callused, skin in these places. The opposite is also true: skin that goes untouched grows thin and fragile. Thus, the skin that constitutes a natural brassiere for a woman's breasts becomes thinner and thinner. The more a woman seeks toned, firm, 'supported' breasts in the confines of a bra, the less toned, firm, and supported they become.

"Ideally, since a woman's breasts change according to her cycle, she should have an entire 'wardrobe' of bras, each a different size for adapting to each slight variation."

Another important element of many vacations is the sea. "I started

thinking about the action of cool, moving water on the body. From there, it wasn't too long before I created my first product: a rotary breast-shower that reproduced the effects of a dip in the ocean-only more so. I have women to thank for that success! That's what's been so marvelous about my career. I've spoken to more than 100,000 women; every one of them has taught me something. Clarins owes them everything. They are the ones who have shown us the way; they are the ones who have made their true and pressing needs known. I may have invented solutions, but you cannot invent their needs. By responding to these needs, I have helped beauty itself become a form of therapy.

"And it seems that I, in turn, taught something to every one of them. A former client I saw recently told me, "You know, when I came to see you for the first time on Rue Tronchet, I left with my girdle in my handbag- you'd convinced me how bad it was to crush my body under that thing."

After daily observation of his patients' problems- and in-depth study of their former treatments, results, solutions-Jacques Courtin develops his first theories and methods.

Advice about too tight a bra was the easy part: all he had to do was share this information with the women who came to his beauty institute.

What became of his idea about cool-water baths? This was 1946, and bathrooms in France were not as common as they are today. Jacques Courtin starts thinking about a device, which would spray the breast in a rotating motion to guarantee even massage of its entire surface, a device, which could be available to all women, all year long. One they could attach to the faucet of their washbasins or even their kitchen sinks! One they could...

As he walks across Paris's Buttes-Chaumont Park one day, he notices the watering system on the wide lawns yellowing under a hot setting sun.

"That constant spray-you know, those industrial sprinklers with their rotating, regular-in fact, rhythmic jets. I thought, that's exactly what I'm looking for!"

What luck! A rotary garden hose-in the right place at the right time.

"I couldn't let this opportunity go by. We all let opportunities go by-and when they do, they go quickly. And often forever. We miss them sometimes by a hair's breadth. In my opinion, you always have to be ready to seize them, and, especially, to take them to the next level."

Jacques Courtin has found his system. All that is left now is to adapt it-to design his device in detail, manufacture it and patent it.

"You can't imagine the look on my mother's face as she watched me test this thing at the kitchen faucet with my rubber hose and a little aluminum dome. I had the little dome made by a metalworker, Monsieur Latriche. I learned so much from the craftsmen I used at the beginning- everything needed to be invented. Mr. Latriche had the hardest time understanding what I planned to do with this strange contraption I had ordered from him. In truth, he really couldn't care less. My mother, on the other hand, was completely dumbfounded. Is this what all his years of school prepared him for? She just did not understand why all this interested me so much.

'What are you doing, Jacques?'

'I'm inventing a breast-shower.'

'A breast-shower? Why, for Heaven's sake? Don't you have better things to worry about than women's breasts?'

'But it's important, mama.'

'Important... Who do you take me for?!'

"It was almost impossible to calm her down. As far as she was concerned, I was wasting my time to say nothing of losing my mind! But she also knew that I sometimes had good ideas. So she wound up leaving me to it..."

Yet there had to be a way of protecting the breast under the little dome, which fit over it.

"I imagined a kind of screen which held the breast in just the right position, protected it from the rotors and let the water flow out. Lounging on the sofa one afternoon, I was thinking about this long and hard, an arm resting against my forehead, my eyes staring into the lamp directly above me. I suddenly realized what I was seeing: the lampshade's arched, wire frame looked both delicate and strong at the same time. Once again, I had found what I needed!"

Jacques Courtin goes straight to a lampshade maker. The made-to-order part is ready in no time.

"I dealt with a wide range of craftsmen: metalworkers, woodworkers, mechanics and more. They were all eager to help, albeit often pretty surprised by my requests; I'd characterize their reactions as 'friendly amusement.' One thing is for sure: every one of them felt proud when I showed them the final product.

"I initially joined forces with an artisan who specialized in beauty-care devices, Pierre Joseph. We became 50-50 partners-the patents were in both our names. But when the investment costs became a bit too heavy for him, he pulled out. I guess he didn't fully believe in our promising future. I wound up buying up his half and we remained friends."

At the 1947 Women and Beauty trade show in Paris's Palais des Glaces, Jacques Courtin unveils his invention: the rotary breast-shower. He calls it Médecin'Bust. "During its last years on the market it didn't sell as well. That's a real shame," Jacques Courtin says. "Cool moving water is the best way to keep breasts firm."

The device is ingenious for its time. At the trade show, an attractive woman approaches Jacques Courtin's stand. From her aloofness, her technical questions, her aplomb, it is easy to guess that the information she is after is not for her; this is obviously a professional through and through. A beautician? Better still a journalist! And the most influential in her field: Mme la Comtesse de la Touche, director of *Votre Beauté*, the only magazine of the day dedicated to the subject, despite its enormous importance to women.

In fact, Jacques Courtin had contacted her. A simple, well-phrased letter had promised something innovative at the Women and Beauty trade show. Great news: she had come to see for herself.

Yvonne de la Touche is infatuated with the machine and plans to write about it in her magazine. Jacques Courtin hardly dares believe his good fortune. He is not yet aware that this is the start of a lifelong love affair between him and the press.

"Without journalists, we would never have developed so quickly. They've understood us. Indeed, they have loved us."

Over the years, Yvonne de la Touche remained Clarins's good fairy:

"In the 60s, she preferred my face products to all others and she wasn't shy about saying so, either even to my competitors whose ad budgets outpaced ours by far. I must say, I was flattered. I mean, I knew our products were good, but loyalty to that degree? Well, this intrigued me, and one day I couldn't help but ask her why.

'Believe it or not, you owe it to my left arm.'

'Your left arm?'

"She laughed and said: 'I'd noticed that the skin on one of my forearms was different from the skin on the other. For several weeks, this ate at me. I even asked a doctor friend, who couldn't explain it-though he definitely saw the same thing I did: my left forearm was smoother, suppler, firmer. Younger-looking. Then one day, as I was getting ready in the morning, it hit me: there I was, using my right hand, as always, to apply a Clarins oil to my face, and holding the bottle in my left. When I finish, there's always a little oil left on my hand, which I never want to waste. So what do I do with it? I rubbed it on...you guessed it: my left forearm! Eureka! At that point, I hadn't been using your oil for very long, but the result was unmistakable. There was a real difference in the two arms. With proof like that, I didn't really have a choice. That was the first time I could ever really admit that beauty products can work!'"

Jacques is proud of his Médecin'Bust.

His wife, Maria-Luisa, nicknamed Malou, has been his biggest fan. A political refugee from Spain, where her family was cruelly treated, she confides, "From the moment I met my husband, he was everything to me: my beloved, my father, my mother, my family...I was very young. Alone. My husband is an extraordinary person. He is naturally happy. He's worked incredibly hard. I've always understood what he's wanted to do I've always tried to encourage and support him, even though Clarins has taken up more and more of his time. But my husband has always believed in certain principles: no business dinners, no work on week-ends. He could work all day long, from early in the morning to late in the evening, but he's always known when to stop."

Jacques Courtin has just married and when he speaks of putting his device on the market, Malou advises, "I have great trust in my pharmacist... and the machines reliable. You should go see him. He might be able to help."

The first appointment is made with Pharmacie Le Floch, on the corner of Rue Montmartre and Rue de Provence in Paris. Jacques dreams about the meeting night and day, the first ever where he will show his device to a healthcare professional. However, one detail haunts him: if there is no faucet in the pharmacy, how will he be able to do his demonstration?

He decides that if water is unavailable, he will make the rotary blades turn by blowing on them. Then he meticulously oils the central shaft to ensure that the machine runs smoothly.

The big day arrives. He rides his moped to the pharmacy, where a warmly smiling woman in an immaculate lab coat greets him at the door. Her cordial welcome bolsters his confidence and he starts in on his pitch. With obvious interest, the pharmacist listens closely. Time for the demonstration: Jacques Courtin takes a deep breath and blows into the tube with all his might. The rotary blades start turning. The pharmacist continues to smile. Suddenly, thousands of minuscule drops of oil shoot out into her face and splatter her lab coat.

Jacques Courtin is petrified. Time seems to stop.

"Her white coat speckled with droplets! If I could have dug a hole and crawled into it, I would have."

Fortunately, the pharmacist has a sense of humor and breaks into a hearty laugh. Wiping her face with the hem of her stained coat, she says, "OK. I'll take six. But without the oil!"

We're on our way!, thinks Jacques.



Orders start pouring in. Jacques Courtin assembles and delivers, assembles and delivers. He becomes an expert conductor of his little orchestra of a business-which soon receives the boost he has been promised, and in which he had not dared believe. A major figure of Parisian society, Mme de la Touche has all doors opened to her thanks to her prominent magazine (financed, it is rumored, by a well-known tycoon as a gesture of affection).

Her world could not be more different from Jacques Courtin's. While she lives the enviable life of a jet setter (well before the term is coined), he is as he will be all his life: reserved, discrete, and happy. Nevertheless, intrigued by his invention and convinced by his sales pitch, she wants to become his friend and with that she decides to lend a hand in the launch of the new machine. An article, not even a full column at that, in *Votre Beauté* causes a riot: all of a sudden, everyone is asking for Médecin'Bust. Jacques Courtin works day and night to fill the landslide of orders.

With humor and palpable emotion, Malou's sister Leonor Greyl remembers the early days: "We sometimes had to help assemble the machines. There we all were, in the Rue Guénégaud dining room. Jacques is a trustworthy man-he doesn't make promises he can't keep. He had accepted those orders, and now he had to deliver! Everyone was seated around the table and we formed a mini-production-line. When we slowed down, Jacques picked up his own pace to get us going again. It was a very joyful, very exciting time. Later, he hired me for his beauty institute. I quickly saw that I had a knack for hair care in fact, I think I had a kind of sixth sense about it. Jacques was the one who suggested the formulas for my first shampoos and treatments. He really got me started on my way. I'm so grateful to him."

Today Leonor Greyl is the high priestess of hair care, boasting an elite group of women around the world who cannot live without her products-some of which have attained mythical status. "Jacques took me in when I came to France to be with my sister. I have nothing but good things to say about him. I admire him so. He was the first to attend to women's bodies. In the 50s, women were starting to get paid vacations; for two weeks each year, they showed some skin. Up until then, they were a lot less preoccupied with what their bodies looked like. I know that I personally thought I was too puny. I remember layering on extra clothes so I could look more buxom. In Spain, a married woman is supposed to gain weight-that's chalked up to *felicidad*: happiness. But it's also true that in Spain we were more prudish than the French; we showed less of ourselves."



Jacques Courtin's extraordinary sensitivity to all aspects of the human body continues to grow. Many of his friends are physicians, welcomed regularly into his home.

"Jacques spent his time learning," Leonor Greyl continues. He always wanted to know more. Several years later, when he created his famous beauty institute, he was as industrious as ever. No he was more than industrious: he was indefatigable! He'd say, 'I have to get in first every morning-sets a good example for the others.' In any case, he certainly was first where it mattered: dispensing beauty treatment worthy of the word. His approach was very medical. Besides, there was actually a doctor from the Hôpital Saint-Louis who worked in Jacques's institute part time.

Jacques was two different people at work and home. At the institute, he was demanding, rigorous-sometimes even harsh. At home, he was very human, thoughtful, and considerate. He was extremely close to his wife and children. He did everything so that his family could go on vacation for two months a year even though he never took a day off-he wanted to concentrate on developing his business. His was always engrossed in his work. This had nothing to

do with money I can assure you. He never let money go to his head. No, it was because he truly loved his work. He had a gift, an innate gift. It's what put him ahead of his time. So ahead that none of his competitors ever caught up to him."

Now luck smiled on Jacques Courtin: Médecin'Bust is a success in pharmacies but also in herbalists' shops and diet-product stores. The extra income is welcome, but his main concern remains the same: making women as beautiful as possible.

4.

"Always put yourself in another's place."

The very early '50s. After a treatment session, a loyal patient corners Jacques Courtin: "You know, you do marvels with my looks. But couldn't you be a little nicer? You're so reserved sometimes-if I didn't know better I'd say you were downright shy. I have a friend like you-a big professional but not an ounce of human feeling. OK, so he's an auto mechanic-a far cry from what you do. But...when you think of it, there's not much separating patients and clients. A little while ago, he started opening up. I think because of some books he read. Made a big difference in his business. It might not hurt for you to try the same thing."

Jacques Courtin is surprised. As well as a little insulted. He never imagined that reserve could be misinterpreted as coldness. When he goes straight to meet his patient's mechanic he is told, "Yeah, I read these books about human relations. They come from the U.S. Some of them even have what they call 'recipes for success.'"



Jacques Courtin is skeptical. How could manuals like that really help anyone succeed? Nevertheless, it is worth a shot. The mechanic lends them to Jacques, who finishes them in one sitting.

"When you first read them, you think they're not exactly going to

change anyone's life. My immediate reaction was, I do all this already, this is nothing new to me- and I never laid eyes on these books!"

His patient begs Jacques to read them again. He does. and sees the light. "In fact, it was all in there, but what a chore to get through! The ingredients were good, but mish-mashed together; pearls of wisdom drowning in interminable paragraphs. It's a little like plants: they have special powers but you have to know how to make the most of them, how to extract their essential oils so they can work their wonders. And that's just what I did for one of my executives. His human-relations skills were weak, to say the least he was incapable of putting himself in someone else's place. In other words, he did not know how to ask himself, 'Would like to be on the listening end of what I'm saying right now?' I didn't want to give him these books because I knew he'd not have the patience to get through them. So I summarized them for him. I extracted the essential sentences just like you extract a plant's essential oils. It was just what he needed those key ideas opened his eyes."



First and foremost, Jacques Courtin practices what he preaches.

"For the past fifty years, those books have been constantly buzzing around in my head. And without a doubt, the concept of putting yourself in someone else's place has affected me above anything else. When you think about it, the key to human relations is nothing more than simply considering things from the other person's point of view. My favorite example of that is: I adore chocolate. The lion adores meat. If I want to cajole a lion, how far am I going to get if I give him chocolate? This has been a guiding principle of my life- even my private life. You put yourself in another's place and you find common ground."

As for his private life, his wife has just given birth to Christian. Jacques Courtin doesn't know it yet, but his successor is already being groomed.



Meanwhile, as his business continues to gather momentum he is thinking about sharing his expertise with others. He and his friend Robert Carlier open a school on Rue Marbeuf, in the heart of Paris. For years to come, the School of Beauty Technicians and Estheticians will train the industry's most eminent professionals.

"I was surprised that none of the beauticians I hired was able to tell me the weight she applied on a client with her hands. To answer that question, all you need is to press your palms onto a simple bathroom scale. They'd learned the motions, but never realized that the weight you apply for a massage is just as important, if not more so, as the movements themselves. Take two beauticians from the same school, massaging in the same way: one of them is applying an ounce of weight, the other two pounds. In the first case, you're working on the nerve endings; in the second you're outright irritating the skin. There's a whole range in between. It's a little like sounds: some are so high-pitched we can't hear them. We've trained more than 6,000 beauticians and, to this day, when we instruct accredited, experienced professionals in the Clarins method, we begin by asking them how much weight they apply. And to this day, we rarely get any answers."

Talk about the hand with Jacques Courtin and he immediately brings up the handshake-where most physical contact begins.

"You learn an enormous amount from a handshake. By the same token, it can be very misleading about someone's personality. A good handshake is really a simple affair: the contact point should be just at the intersection of the thumb and index finger. There's no sense in squeezing too hard, or too soon. The hand should stay firm. That's what goes into a good handshake. It's the starting point of physical communication."



The Clarins method is of course the Jacques Courtin method.

"It's a technique that comes from two things: observation and experience. I didn't read this in a massage book. I call it 'tactile communication.' Everything is communicated through touch—including life itself. A couple shows affection by holding hands first, then by hugging and by grasping each other around the waist. After that, their entire bodies touch—and nine months later a baby is born. Then what happens right away? The nurse sets the baby on the mother's tummy. Loving, touching, lead to birth. Love is the most supreme manifestation of touch and skin is its essential organ. We express our sympathy, our compassion through touch. We show how interested we are in another human being.

"All the beauticians trained at Clarins learn this. I always explain to them what a privilege it is to do the job they do: it's the only non-medical profession where touching is a form of treatment, of therapy. I tell them how important they are and how every gesture counts. I tell them how the same gesture can have totally different effects according to very specific criteria: whether they use their whole hands or just their fingers, how fast or slowly they massage and move from one spot to another, the number of movements they use (too many is annoying, too few is inefficient), the length of their strokes and, of course, the weight they apply with their hands.

"The difference can mean so much: with an ounce of pressure you're almost just skimming—relaxing your client while draining toxins from the surface of the skin. With ten ounces of pressure, you're working to actually expel stagnating liquid. For this reason, the scale is a fixture in my classrooms we use it constantly. At the start of a new term, we ask our students, 'Have you ever massaged a scale? Well, that's just what we're going to do!'

"Everything counts in a session: whether the product you're using is efficient, of course, but also how much of it you apply. Too little and you are obviously not getting its full effect; but too much is a mistake as well. If you glob on a face cream, your poor client winds up with it in her eyes and hair. If you do the same with a body treatment, even after a shower she still feels it all over her. Another essential point is never to pull at the skin: don't pinch it, don't

crease it don't stretch it. After all, when you age, what does your skin do? It stretches.

"Now, most important of all is the beautician's 'bedside manner.' If an applicant doesn't smile, we don't hire her. The right esthetician is a naturally happy, smiling person who loves her job. Her hands must love their job. She could be the most talented woman in the world, if she doesn't make her clients feel welcome, we're not the place for her. But when a Clarins beautician gets all this right, every woman should meet her."



Let us go back in time once more: in his momentum, Jacques Courtin is thinking again. He wants to create a weight-loss device for home use, aimed at women whose budgets or schedules or both preclude visits to his beauty institute.

Thus Masvelt is born, a massage system that replicates the three principal moves of weight-loss treatments via a host of small, specially designed rubber rollers. On each one, a suction cup works to loosen, a series of bumps work to knead and a set of small strips work to eliminate. All are mounted on a metal axis with a wooden handle at both ends.

For the boxwood turned handles, Jacques finds a wood turner in the Drôme region of the South of France and is amused to learn that the factory specializes in giant peppermills shipped to American restaurants where smaller models tend to "walk out the door." Jacques order is accepted unquestioningly.

Jean Roux, an accredited accountant, auditor and now member of the Clarins Group's supervisory board, remembers: "It was the end of 1953. I had just started doing the books for an old wood turnery, the Etablissements Mayet, which had been in operation almost a hundred years. In the client database compiled by hand, of course, back then I was intrigued by this particular account that just kept on growing. It was the Courtin account. My client asked me to go to

Paris to check it out.



He meets Jacques Courtin for the first time.

"I made some suggestions about his accounting system. By the time our second meeting was over, he'd asked me to work for him. I took my job very seriously, and could see right away that the 'Jacques Courtin, Inc.' one-man show was going to do very well with healthy turnover and good profits. But profits which, given the nature of the business, would be eaten up by taxes."

The business was going to die on the vine; no cash flow meant no investment. "This is what I suggested to Jacques Courtin: create a company. Imagine my astonishment when the following Saturday he tells me 'No sooner said than done!' The paperwork was being processed. The company, called Clarins, would be set up at 35 Rue Tronchet in the 9th district of Paris. Rapid response to a challenge, finding the right solution, facing the unexpected head-on—those are marks of a true leader. And make no mistake about it: Jacques Courtin has them written all over him."



Jean Roux is one of Jacques Courtin's most ardent admirers. Yet, he has certainly rubbed elbows with his share of big bosses. "I've followed the careers of thousands of CEOs, but there's only one I've watched climb, within his own firm, all the rungs of the corporate ladder: from self-financed solo-act to president of a major, publicly traded company. This 'exception to the rule' is called Jacques Courtin. I've always admired him, but I think I really started seeing his brilliance toward the end of the 60s, when everything he touched turned to gold. I remember once when four or five of us were in his office on Rue Tronchet. There was an important decision to be made, with the future direction of Clarins at stake.

We thought, we talked, and we hesitated. Suddenly someone blurted out, 'Anyway, whatever the decision, Clarins always comes out ahead.' Jacques snapped right back, 'If we think like that, we won't get very far! Always coming out ahead demands more vigilance, more caution. Not less.' Jacques always had his wits about him and never let past successes go to his head. He never thought he was stronger than the next guy."

When talking about Clarins, today a billion-euro company, Jacques Courtin often uses another of his famous parables-bolstered by his smile and sparkling eyes: "You see this table? Beautiful, isn't it? It's made of marble. I've had lunch here every day for over twenty years. Let's say that at the beginning this table was worth 'ten.' Today someone tells me it's worth 'a thousand.' Good. Great. But what does that change? It's still the same table and I still eat on it every day. So far, none of this makes me any richer. For those numbers to mean something I have to give up my table-I have to wind up without it. But I love my table. So selling it is out of the question."



Thirty-five Rue Tronchet is a choice piece of real estate, coveted by several companies. Since 1904 Monsieur Bataille and his sister, both wigmakers whose beautiful creations are fashioned from natural hair, have owned the lease.

Monsieur Bataille is hesitant: "Maybe I can let you have part of the premises, but I don't want to have to leave. Talk it over with my manager."

"A smart man, that manager," Jacques Courtin says. "Sly. Gave me some good advice. He told me that a bank owned the premises and the only legal way to use a part of it without spending a fortune would be to set up a joint stock company with Monsieur Bataille and myself. So that's what I did. Then the manager said, 'You want to join forces with a 78-year-old man? It's probably not a bad idea to bring me in to run things I'll take care of everything.' I agreed."

More good advice followed: 'Your business is brisk,' he told me. 'You're expanding. But try not to grow too fast. Never more than 25%. Beyond that, things get out of hand-you lose control.' He was right. I saw that later on. His advice helped me calm down a bit, and build a solidly-based company."

Thus began the improbable cohabitation between Mr. Bataille's douilleuses-women who implanted hair into wigs and Jacques Courtin's physical therapists and beauticians.

"Monsieur Bataille had the reputation of being very pious. His wife had passed away. His daughter was in a convent. None of which, it seems, prevented him from innocently brushing up against the beauticians in the corridors. In fact, I remember that, when his health began failing, that was the first sign of his decline: the beauticians started telling me they no longer had to hug the walls when they passed him in the hallway."

That is how the Clarins company is officially created on March 15, 1954.

Olivier, Jacques and Malou Courtin's second son, was born on August 6 of that same year, sharing a birthday with his father. Two Leos.

5.

*"Thanks to his kindness they spared
Clarins from the lions."*

Why "Clarins"?

Now there is a question Jacques Courtin is frequently asked. This clear-sounding name with feminine overtones, pronounceable in every language, which rhymes with the French word *mince*-meaning "thin"-must have been quite difficult to dream up, was it not?

The explanation is as beautiful as it is unexpected.

"As a teenager I was in a play in my Catholic junior high school. It was a non-speaking part; I'm dyslexic- they didn't call it that at the time, but they were afraid I'd get tripped up by a script. The action took place during the Roman Empire, when they were throwing Christians to the lions. The set was basically bundles of hay-pretty rudimentary. My costume was a jute sac with holes for my head and arms. Clarins was the name of my character, a jailer who guarded and fed the prisoners and lions. The future victims kept calling for my help, screaming, 'Clarins, Clarins, Clarins...' This benevolent man secretly overfed the lions so they wouldn't feel like eating the prisoners when they entered the arena. But the Romans wound up figuring this out. 'OK! Since he likes feeding the lions so much, he can just make the next meal of himself!' They brought me to the

arena and made me go in. A great uproar the crowd started shouting, 'Clarins, Clarins, Clarins!' Then to the great surprise of all, the lions, grateful for the way I'd treated them, lay down at my feet and let me live. The people called it a miracle and applauded.

"The next day all the students pointed me out to each other, called my name, wanted to spend time with me. Clarins had brought me luck-I became kind of a school hero. The one who saved the Christians! From that moment on, everyone at school called me Clarins. I always said that if I ever created something, that's what I'd call it too. Thanks to his kindness, the lions spared Clarins. Thanks to Clarins, my good-luck charm, people know and appreciate me. That's a lovely symbol for a brand, wouldn't you say?"

The other question Jacques Courtin often hears has to do with his brand's colors.

"From my office window on Rue Tronchet I could see a One Way sign. You couldn't miss it for its red background. Red really gets your attention. When you absolutely want people to notice something, you color it red. Since at the time I didn't have the budget for optimal product-placement in stores, I figured that my only chance to get us noticed was to use red. And white-not only to offset the red but also because white means 'medical, professional, pure, efficient.' And then the gold, well, that was for a touch of prestige."

While we're at it, what about the oval around the name?

"I think of it as a halo. A saint's halo. Plus, I've always noticed that when something's especially important, you circle it."

One day at the movies, a scene in the newsreel gives Jacques Courtin an idea.

"There was this test pilot flying in an open cockpit. His face was obviously exposed to the outside air and you could see his skin rippling with the force of the wind."

Jacques Courtin recognizes the effect. It is exactly what happens with a properly executed Wetterwald maneuver massage the skin "flutters," just like a slack sail on a boat. The waves of air neither pinched the pilot's skin nor wrinkled it, neither pulled at nor distended it. They did not seem to hurt it in any way. In fact, they appeared to act like a form of treatment.

In a flash, Jacques Courtin realizes the great benefits to the human body of harnessing the power of air.

It takes him less than two weeks to find his supplier, The City of Paris. Fascinatingly, Paris at the time is still crisscrossed from one end to the other by an elaborate underground pneumatic message system, which uses compressed air to propel cylindrical, object-bearing containers through a network of tubes. The SUDAC (Société Urbaine d'Air Comprimé) manages the structure.

The city agrees to connect the Clarins beauty treatment institute up to its compressed air network. All Jacques Courtin need do now is come up with the regulating mechanism for dosing the outflow-at the right rhythm, rate and pressure-through a small compressor onto the patient's skin. And conceive the methodology in which he'll train the professionals hired for this treatment.

"With Model'Bust, I started out by selling water. I went on to sell wind. What's more basic than that? And yet..."

At 35 Rue Tronchet Jacques Courtin installs cubicles for facial and body treatments. He hires physical therapists and beauticians. Dependable and conscientious, they are trained in pulsed air massotherapy by Jacques Courtin himself.

"In 1954, a physical therapy diploma was a fairly new thing," says Olga Janon, one of these pioneers. "And the training was very medical. I was ready to go work in a hospital but by nature and by taste, I was very drawn to the beauty sector. I saw beauty as an asset that gave a woman confidence and allowed her to assert herself. It was the early days of painless childbirth; we were starting to see women's roles in a different light. One day at school, I saw an ad: 'Physical therapist needed for beauty therapy.' The idea sounded a little crazy, but I wanted to know more. I met Monsieur Courtin. He seemed upright and determined back then, and he's certainly proved that to be true throughout these years. As far as I'm concerned, he's the perfect incarnation of the self-made man.

"All his clients had their own file, with detailed information, and each woman was closely monitored. Every evening we all went over our files with Monsieur Courtin, and he gave us specific instructions according to each particular case. This was done in a very medical manner, and I think it's what really got Clarins off the ground."

"Even before creating the Clarins products," Jean Roux says, "Jacques Courtin established an entire system of client information, set out in individual files. This was a real database, which was constantly updated."



Few beauty institutes are focusing on the body and on slimming. Many early Clarins clients are sales assistants, actresses, women whose careers depend to a large extent on their looks. The movie star Martine Carol, prima ballerina Ludmilla Tchérina, Geneviève Page of the Comédie Française many a diva came in at least weekly. "I'll never forget what one of them said to me. When I greeted her with the biggest possible smile-like Monsieur Courtin insisted we

do-she snapped, 'My dear, you smile too much! One day you'll get wrinkles.' Another star came into my cubicle and dropped her mink on the floor. I stooped to pick it up and put it on a hanger. She stopped me and said, 'No, leave it, it's for my dog. He wants to sleep and that way he'll be more comfortable.'

However, little by little, another type of customer started coming: ordinary women who were beginning to pay attention to their beauty, face and body, weight and general appearance. Women who are gradually learning to want to be beautiful, to be pampered, for their own pleasure. "At the time, it was a sign of female assertiveness," Olga explains. "It was a learning experience, an experiment. Beauty had always been important, but reserved for the elite. With Clarins, it was accessible to everyone. It had been democratized."

Jacques Courtin believes that every woman without exception can be beautiful. It is never too early. It is never too late.

Extremely demanding with himself and others, he is a tireless worker. His employees respect his courage and tenacity, but his list of virtues does not stop there.

"Jacques Courtin is very human," says Eliane Pietralonga, hired at the beginning of the 60s. "I saw many examples of this, but it was certainly the very first which touched me so. I had a little dog I was very fond of-a mongrel. One morning while I was walking him he managed to get away from me and it was impossible to find him. I called Clarins in tears: 'I'm not coming in today. I have to look for my dog.' They said they would get along without me, but to try to make it in as soon as I could. I got there at the end of the morning. I hadn't found him. My eyes were red and my eyelids were puffy. At

lunchtime, I headed for the cafeteria at 29 Rue Tronchet; Monsieur Courtin arranged for a cook to come in every day and serve lunch to the whole staff around a big table. On my way, I ran into Monsieur Courtin at reception and told him about my dog. He tried to make me feel better and then I left because he was expecting lunch guests. A few minutes later, as I sat down with the other workers who do I see coming out of nowhere-like an apparition-but Monsieur Courtin! 'Eliane, Eliane, stop crying. They found your dog-I just got a call.' He had gone out of his way to come tell me that. He'd interrupted his business lunch so I wouldn't have to suffer one more minute."



Eliane Pietralonga is a 23-year-old nurse when Jacques Courtin hires her. Her mother-in-law drove her to the interview. "I think Monsieur Courtin has forgiven me for a lot of things in my life, but I'm sure he still holds this first meeting against me, with my domineering mother-in-law who would not leave us alone. She followed me right into his office, where he let it be known with a smile that he did not necessarily think a third person was needed. All of which she had the nerve to supremely ignore! Despite this handicap, ten days later I was told I had the job. I remember his office doors: two immense black-and-white reproductions of Egyptian goddesses facing each other, with outstretched hands as if to greet the 'pharaoh' that he was. He was an elegant man and he gave off extraordinary strength. He was always gave the impression of being athletic; I know he practiced judo for many years, at his sister's urging. At first my job was very varied: depending on the time of day and our particular needs, I was a nurse, a hostess, a cashier..."



"Institute" does not accurately describe the early Clarins. The word is both too pompous and too trivial. Located on the second floor of

a beautiful, old Haussmannian building, its entrance is modest and its furniture simple.

On a desk, sit a telephone, a large appointment book, an iron card file and some pencils. Nothing luxurious.

Yet, the institute is packed from 8 o'clock in the morning until seven at night, six days a week. The treatment works. To this day, some clients talk about having literally watched their "cellulite disappear."

A least fifteen patients go through one cubicle every day. "At 1.30pm we broke for lunch but we were replaced by part-time masseuses. The demand was so great that we couldn't have a minute's down-time."



Meals are prepared and served at a dining table-by Simone. The atmosphere is cheerful; jokes and laughter abound. When there are tears, there is always someone to dry them.

"We were happy to be working together. We were very motivated. There was a lot of warmth and no rivalry. The dining room moved from 23 to 29 Rue Tronchet, but the atmosphere remained the same. It was so pleasant, even though the work was tiring. I really think this warm, human feeling had to be pretty rare in certain luxurious beauty institutes."



"The institute was maybe not the most sumptuous," Eliane remembers, "but Rolls-Royces still pulled up at our door to drop off some of our best clients. We had movie stars and famous singers. Even Arabian princesses. One of them was the granddaughter of a very well known king-a breathtaking, incomparable beauty. I had

the privilege of receiving her. Such beauty was unimaginable-especially at the age of 24 after six pregnancies. She came regularly to stock up on Clarins products. One day she sent her French secretary with a request that amazed us: she wanted the entire line everything-every single product. We were getting the order together, all of us a little surprised, when her secretary told me that the princess no longer had the packaging of our products she'd used before, and so wanted to try everything again from scratch."

A sale of thousands of francs of the time-a red letter day! but not the only example of extravagance. "Much later," Eliane continues, "a fabulously wealthy client, getting on a bit in years, bought our Lifting Biologique by the dozens. This was a product for the face, but she massaged her face and entire body with it. She told us it kept her skin firm all year round.

"I also remember two Saudi Arabian sisters, who came together, but each in her own Rolls, one white, the other blue, and how their chauffeurs chatted with each other out on the sidewalk, waiting for them. This small nun also stopped by regularly-and discretely with her little fifty-franc bill for face cream. I wanted to give it to her for free, but she always refused."

"There was also a well know brothel of the time" she says with a hearty laugh. "Her young women-all superb!-were mostly respectable, discrete, married with children, either trying to make ends meet or hoping to live out their fantasies. Almost all of them were our clients. I still remember the conversations this 'manager' had with Monsieur Courtin at the reception desk, at the top of her lungs to make sure everyone heard: 'Ah, Monsieur Courtin! So you have staff problems too? No one takes their job seriously these days.

It's like pulling teeth, getting them to show up on time. I ask them, 'Just where do you think you are?' And Monsieur Courtin, with his dry wit, kept up his end of the conversation easily, knowing full well we were doubled over in laughter and reveling in the spectacle of it all!"

6.

*"You have to be selfless to be successful
in the beauty sector."*

The Clarins center is doing very well, its new techniques revolutionizing beauty treatment. It is so successful that its reputation spreads to physical therapists throughout the country. They ask Jacques Courtin if they can use his compressed air method. However, as Paris is the only city in France with an underground air system, he must continuously turn them away. "We were submerged with requests. I said no to them all. The method was simple, unique, exclusive, terrific-but as far as I knew, unusable anywhere but in Paris!"

Until the day Jean Roux's friend Pierre Vernhes shows up to do an internship. A student from the prestigious Ecole Sup de Co Paris, Pierre keeps watching the requests flow in and the refusals stream out. Each lost opportunity frustrates him more than the last: How can Clarins let these precious opportunities go by? How can you have such great "demand" and not match it with "supply"? He delves a little deeper into the problem.

"It was an ideal case study," Pierre Vernhes remembers. "We checked, and in fact only Paris had a compressed air network. We were at a dead end. But this thing just had to be done! It was the kind of dilemma that has always inspired me. I set out to find a solution. And I found one."



In Levallois, a Paris suburb, Pierre Vernhes locates a factory that makes a rotary compressed air machine. Perfect-no piston means virtually no noise or vibration. The contraption can be regulated to produce a steady stream of air at the desired level of pressure. Weighing in at almost half a ton, it has obviously been designed for industrial purposes but Pierre Vernhes doesn't care-he's good with his hands and very imaginative. After a few adjustments, the machine is ready for use in Jacques Courtin's massotherapy technique. The patent is registered with the name *aerovibrothérapie*.



Finally, demand can be met. Pierre Vernhes himself installs the first machine at a physical therapist's office outside Paris, while Jacques Courtin trains him in the revolutionary method.

As the number of machines progressively increases in France, Switzerland, and Belgium (where, Pierre Vernhes remembers, an office in Charleroi had a staircase so narrow, the device had to be passed through a window), the massage-drainage technique continues to live up to its stellar reputation.

A reputation not without its comical moments. "To work well, these machines had to be perfectly regulated and oiled. As a precautionary measure, we equipped each with an oil filter, which had to be cleaned on a regular basis. Well one day, while she was working on a patient, a Swiss therapist in Neuchâtel noticed some oil dripping from a tube; she had forgotten to clean her filter. After a while, her patient was covered in oil. The therapist broke out in a cold sweat. When the treatment was finished, the patient got up, ran her hand over her body and joyously exclaimed, 'Oh look! My fat's melting!'"



The Clarins name is starting to be known-a name synonymous with "beauty taken seriously." Nearly a hundred machines have now been installed, which means nearly a hundred sets of paperwork to be processed. "We couldn't sell the machines outright; they were too expensive and the therapists didn't have big budgets. We preferred a licensing agreement, with a fee paid per period of use. An electric meter gave us the readings. Plus, we wanted to be the ones doing the maintenance to be sure the machines were functioning like they should. All these details had to be included in contracts. I later learned that our contracts were shown as examples at the prestigious HEC business school in a franchising course called something like 'How, With a Medical Background, To Form a Company and Invent a Model Franchise Contract.'"



Did this homage feed Jacques Courtin's pride, or at least his ambitions?

"I had one ambition: help women be as beautiful as they could be. Success for success's sake wasn't what mattered. I had been sensitized to beauty and how important it is to women; first by my sister and her friends and my mother's friends, too, then by patients in the hospital. I wanted to find effective solutions to problems that were far from trivial. I gave beauty its credibility. Beauty is in fact so important. I respect the feelings women have about this. I love that we can now act with true efficiency and effectiveness in a domain, which up to now was the realm of only dreams. Giving the gift of beauty to another human is giving the gift of well-being. This is comforting, gratifying. It makes me happy. You have to be selfless to be successful in the beauty sector. Like a doctor in medicine."

"You have to be selfless to be successful in the beauty sector." A sentence Jacques Courtin recites often, and shares with others as a basic truth. For him, beauty-like medicine is a calling. It is a

vocation. In matters of beauty as in matters of health, exploiting vulnerability through lies, exaggerations and trickery is unthinkable.

"Can you imagine a doctor's prescribing a drug because it serves his interest? That would be criminal! For a woman, beauty is essential. Not as important as health, you'll say, but who knows..."

7.

"Women are our priority."

Yes, the Clarins name is on its way-but only for treatments performed at the Rue Tronchet beauty center and by physical therapists trained in the method. At the same time, Jacques Courtin has developed, amongst other things, a weight-loss product for use in his cubicles; occasionally he gives a tube or two to his clients.

Called Aminsivits, the product was originally formulated to coat the skin in preparation for a Masvelt massage. However, Masvelt's rubber rollers began to deteriorate when in contact with a greasy substance. So Jacques Courtin came up with a gel, conceived as a great blast of firming freshness-like a whiplash-made with plants known for their astringent and slimming effects. Aminsvit is the first product that both slims and firms-a double action so valued by any woman.

Aminsvit's effects get Jacques Courtin thinking about having a new formula made, this time, exclusively from plant-oil extracts. He knows a lot about the wonders of plants, notably in the world of medicine. "Before Lavoisier, plants were used as medicine. Plants also had a role in religion, when you think of holy oils. Then there is perfume of course. Holy oils, medicinal oils, fragrant oils..."

He keenly pursues the use of plants in beauty products, and soon the "Tonic" Body Treatment Oil is born, the first 100%-natural treatment oil by Clarins. Fifty years later, it is still one of the company's bestsellers, irreplaceable for all the challenges a woman's

body confronts, particularly pregnancy.

Still closely listening to the ever-increasing number of clients flooding into his center, he then creates the "AntiEau10" Body Treatment Oil.

"I was amazed at how many women were saying, 'It's terrible-I have really bad water retention problems.' This lament kept coming back to haunt me, even in the press: 'Women swell up with fluids. A woman's body retains water.' Women have always complained about their extra pounds but in the 50s and 60s, it seemed they were obsessed with water retention. I asked to have the best possible drainage oil made-based on diuretic plants to optimize circulation and elimination. I tested it. It smelled a bit strong but worked remarkably well. It was perfect. The only thing left was to give it a name. I immediately thought of the Anti-Eau Oil. I mean, it was obvious, wasn't it, given what I was hearing all day long? With so many women coming to Rue Tronchet, I had learned to speak their language, the client's language.

That was not, however, the way those around him thought. "I often wound up doing the right thing just by using the words my clients used. The Anti-Eau Oil was a striking example of that. I was talking to a young intern from HEC about what I wanted to call the product. She seemed horrified. 'An anti-water oil? What in Heaven's name does that mean?' She thought it was an oxymoron.

'Have you tested the name?'

'No.'

'Taken a poll?'

'No.'

'You're not going to just put the product out there, just like that?'

'Yes I am.'

"She made a bet that the more stubborn I got, the worse I'd fail. Needless to say, I didn't take her advice-I was very sure of myself, because I was using the language of women. And I was right: the Anti-Eau Oil is among our greatest successes, one of the symbols of our brand. They said 'I retain water,' I answered Anti-Eau Oil. The name has stuck in people's minds, and I can tell you that women have no trouble knowing exactly what the product is for. Neither do some of our competitors, which is why Clarins has to remind them regularly that 'Anti-Eau' is a registered trademark. I have always followed my instincts. Not out of pride or stubbornness but because I've always known that my intuition is based on what I've learned from women."

Jacques Courtin had one product of the famous "oil trilogy" left to create: the "Relax" Body Treatment Oil for relaxation, well-being, calm. With it, the foundations of today's aromatherapy were thoroughly laid, ensuring the products' long-lasting, well-deserved success.



Women, and their opinions, have always been Jacques Courtin's priority in all areas. As he says, "Our bottom line can be found in thousands of little handbags. If they close up, it will be a disaster."

"For Monsieur Courtin what mattered was women only women, always and forever," says Chantal Elbaz, one of the company's first beauticians and now head of training. "There was once this group of bankers in his office. His door was never fully closed and the office was right next to the reception desk. They were having this heated discussion when he saw a client arrive. He could hear she was having some sort of problem and he immediately ran out of the meeting to go find out what it was. He was always like that.

He knew that money, finance, bankers, management were all

important, but his only real priority was his clients." Jacques Courtin adds, "The fact of the matter is, our profits, present and future, come from our clients! Our profits are in the hands of our clients. Without our clients, we have no source of income. So, every day we have to show that we deserve our profits. Our future depends on these women alone and we can never take them for granted. They have to be our priority.

For the moment, Jacques Courtin has his products made by independent pharmaceutical laboratories.

"Every time I placed a new order I asked the lab to change something. The chemists were enthusiastic at first about what amounted to working almost directly with consumers. But they gradually got tired of all the changes. They had really had enough. One of the lab directors finally told me he could no longer change the formula with each new batch. He was diplomatic. He said, 'Since you're beginning to need larger quantities, what you should have is your own chemical engineer.' It was a graceful way of saying he couldn't work for me anymore. However, that was a blessing in disguise. With a chemical engineer by my side, fully dedicated to making-and improving-my products, I could finally let my imagination run wild, and satisfy my demands, which were really the demands and the needs of the women I'd spoken with throughout the years. I could finally perfect my products continuously, based on feedback from their users. What a dream for someone in search of the ideal product!"

Ever feeding his ideas on how to best serve their needs, Jacques Courtin's clients led him to the next level: what he's done for the body is wonderful, they said, but what about the face?

All at once, the brand adds three 100%-natural, 100%plant based facial oils: Lotus for oily skin, Sandalwood for dry skin, Blue Orchid for devitalized skin.

"The aromas of the plant oils were a little overpowering. To cut them down a bit we thought of mixing the oils into a cream. That's how the first Face Treatment Plant Creams came about."



At the same time, as a complement to the body oils, the 'Bain aux Plantes' bath and shower concentrates are developed-so concentrated that one dose is equivalent to over six and a half pounds of plants.

There is Relax Bath and Shower Concentrate, Tonic Bath and Shower Concentrate and...

"I thought about calling one Anti-Eau, to match the name of the oil, but...well, Anti-Water for a bath product? We finally chose Contour Bath and Shower Concentrate, as this one helps in the slimming process. I love the ritual of these 'Bain aux Plantes' products-I describe it in the instructions: First you pour a dose into the tub. Then you turn on the hot water. When you get in you breathe deeply this is aromatherapy. Next, you work up a lather. The product is 100% vegetal, made from coconut oil. It cleanses your skin gently, naturally. With the plant concentrates in it, the water becomes a kind of herbal tea for the body-this is phytotherapy. Lacing through all this is the plant-based fragrance, which infuses the room with an atmosphere of well-being. Aromatherapy and phytotherapy together in one bathing experience.

"Bernard Tapie congratulated me on the 'Bain aux Plantes'. We had the same press agent. He'd read the product instructions, tried it and liked it. He invited me to lunch at the restaurant Au Pactole and said, 'Finally, a product where everything's spelled out-keep going like that and you'll make it big.' Bernard Tapie is an uncommonly intelligent, discerning man-astonishingly nice and

down to earth, too."



Here we are already toward the end of the '60s. A chemical engineer arrives at Clarins and Jacques Courtin has new ideas.

Thanks to his beauty center's hands-on treatment and sound advice about, among other things, good nutrition, his clients are well along the path to weight loss. Now he is hearing different complaints:

"Women were telling me, 'I've lost twenty pounds, that's true. But I've gained ten years' or, 'I've slimmed down all over. Great for my figure, not great for my skin.' That is understandable: blow up a balloon then let the air out-it goes slack. By losing volume, it loses firmness. But there's a remedy for that, just like for post-pregnancy distensions."

Jacques Courtin turns his attention to facial needs during weight loss specifically, to keeping the face firm. "Up to then the focus was only wrinkles. There was 'antiwrinkle' cream. I was the first to talk about firmness." From that point on, firmness has been the guiding concept, the absolute essence, of Clarins products for body and face. It is only recently that this notion has been adopted, or even considered, by the rest of the industry.

In the same vein, when women tell him that losing weight makes them look gaunt and leaves black circles under their eyes he creates the first Eye Contour Gel.

So the process continues.

Giving women what they want, at the best possible price: the foundations of the Clarins philosophy have been laid.

An address (35 Rue Tronchet has expanded first to 29 and now to 23 Rue Tronchet). A line of twenty products, an image associated with slenderness, firmness, beauty and the resolve to go farther.

Jacques Courtin has learned to run a company and motivate his employees. In a January 1969 inter-office memo entitled "Looking for Team Spirit" he shares his management concept: All our executives should be living examples of total cohesion, absolute harmony, solid unity. Our departments should help each other in their work. In the event of differing opinions, which is normal and desirable, aggressive attitudes should not be allowed. We must listen and deliberate to come up with solutions, ease relations and get ahead.



Jean Roux tells us that, at about this period, during a convention organized at the impetus of Humbert Pierantoni, the founder of the *Les Nouvelles Esthétiques* magazine, several major brand CEOs are chatting on the terrace of Cannes's Palais des Festivals. Some of Jacques Courtin's friends are there, but there are also a good number of his competitors. They are comparing and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, profits and prospects. Suddenly, one of them declares, "There's a man who's surpassed us all: Courtin."

"Why?" they all ask as if with a single voice.

"Each of us is strong," the first speaker answers, "maybe even very strong in one or two areas. Courtin is strong in everything."

Clarins is at a turning point in its life. It is just about to bloom.

II

Growth

8.

"Do more, do better, enjoy what you do."

Clarins has become the weight-loss treatment center. Women recommend it enthusiastically to each other for its exclusive pulsed air method. At the same time, Clarins products are slowly but surely building a name for themselves. While available in very limited supply elsewhere, they are principally reserved for the institute's clients.

With his excellent reputation now solidly established, Jacques Courtin could of course stop there. However, it is now that the difficult choices must be made.

"My 100% plant-based oils were unique, and a boon to our success. So was my air method. But I couldn't use them together—talk about ironic! What made the air massage so effective? The rush of waves replicating close to a hundred Wetterwald maneuver massage movements in twenty seconds without pinching or distending the skin (my physical therapists would have needed twenty minutes to do the same thing with their hands). What did these repeated vibrating thrusts of air do to the oils? Sweep them right off my clients' bodies!

"So I had a choice: perform the treatments without the products or concentrate on making products. It was a crucial decision. What

helped me make it was a little calculation that I've never lost sight of: if a very loyal client came to the institute once a week for my air massage, she would reap the benefits 52 times a year. If that same client used my products at home, morning and night twice a day at least-she'd reap the benefits at least 730 times a year. It didn't take long to figure out the next step. Based on my experience at the institute, I had to create new products and methods for home use."



"For us, just formulating a product is not enough. We have to create a home-application technique to optimize its effectiveness. Dispensing treatment in and of itself is not the institute's number-one objective; our main purpose is to have our clients meet with beauty professionals who will make serious, accurate diagnoses and as a result, provide targeted, personalized advice. At Clarins we know all the techniques, every type of massage-from the most ancient to the most recent, native to every country and every culture. As soon as I hear of a new kind of massage, a new treatment method, I run to try it. I must be 'The World's Most Massaged Man!' But don't confuse having a massage with putting on a cosmetic: there are massages that can be done on a fully-clothed body, there are massages that have nothing to do with a product, and then there are methods of applying a beauty treatment product which enhance its effect ten-fold. The latter is what we do at Clarins.

"Our aim is to foster what we think of as 'at-home beauty institutes,' where product and method come together, since the vast majority of women due to lack of time or funds-find it impossible to visit our institutes on a regular basis. We're practically the only company that partners almost every product with its own simple, effective application technique. This goes for make-up removers, masks and so many other products including of course the well known method I developed for the Contouring Facial Lift."

"Just as it's better to work out for 15 minutes at home every day than spend an hour at the gym only once a week, it's better to apply

a product properly twice a day at home than go to a beauty institute only once a week-the '52 versus 730' example again. Needless to say, in the best of all worlds you should do both; but if you have to choose between one or the other you'll benefit more from the daily at-home approach.

"Making the best, most effective products even more effective through the best, most studied gestures performed as often as possible: this is the ultimate treatment and a true professional's concept. This is the real secret for slowing the effects of aging skin, for having a year-round, healthily glowing, young-looking complexion, for being slender and staying that way, year after year. These are my cherished truths, from which I've never wavered. How does the institute help? By diagnosing and establishing personal treatment plans, offering advice and of course providing treatment that cannot be done at home, whilst using the most appropriate the best-products."



During this period, Monsieur Hoffmann joins the Clarins team. With his expertise in cosmetic brand distribution in department stores, he is about to give the company a pivotal boost.

"It had dawned on him that Clarins would do extremely well at these very accessible distribution points," Jacques Courtin remembers. "I immediately thought it was a great suggestion. However, one thing bothered me: I did not want my products to be sold to a huge number of women without my knowing what they thought of them. At 35 Rue Tronchet where most of my sales took place, I could keep up with the products on a daily basis. All I needed was a remark, a comment, some advice, and there I was, off improving and perfecting the formula! In a beauty institute a woman talks with you, she sees you listening to her opinion-she feels it's worth something. How could I get feedback from women I would probably never meet? How could I achieve my "zero-defect" goal that way? This was totally against the 'Clarins principle'.

"So that's how we came up with the idea of client feedback cards.' They perfectly reflected the brand's philosophy: a beauty care plan for every woman."



Client feedback cards: one of the innovations, which Clarins, to this day, can be most proud of. In each product package, there is a little questionnaire card: a kind of aftersales service for cosmetics. Indeed, this was a service that Clarins was the first, and for a long time, the only company to offer.

"Our products were tested, of course," Jacques Courtin explains. "But I've always been struck by an anecdote about a model of car that no longer exists. This car had a peculiar gearshift-a kind of bent shaft attached horizontally to the dashboard. God knows, this model must've been tested and retested before being put on the market but that didn't stop the same complaints coming up time after time and apparently without any explanation. When in use, the thing would twist up, making it harder and harder to shift. The complaints became so bad that the manufacturer finally decided to take action. Committees were formed to find a solution. Every possible test was done. Nothing out of the ordinary came to light. The gearshift was sturdy and seemed to do exactly what it was supposed to. Until the day, a company engineer gets into his wife's car, this very same model. He sees her hang her handbag on the gearshift in fact, it looked for all the world like a clothes-rack peg! And it wasn't just women doing this it turned out men were hanging their tools bags from it and those things can be heavy. Do you think one single test was able to unearth the reason? Nothing can replace direct feedback from consumers who use your product on daily basis. Nothing. Women use our products in their own environments according to their own lifestyles. Nothing can replace that experience."

No sooner do the client cards appear than feedback comes flooding in. Women are surprised, but even more delighted, that a brand has the good sense to ask for their advice.

"They answered our questions on product texture, fragrance, effectiveness. What in turn surprised and delighted us was that sometimes they added comments we didn't even ask for! A process of dialog had been engaged. They were happy to talk to us about our products. Most of the time there were compliments. But it was the criticisms that excited me the most: for us it meant another step on the road to improvement."

""Do more, do better, enjoy what you do.' That's another Clarins motto dear to me. You have to understand that even if compliments are nice to read or listen to, they only encourage us to keep going. Criticism allows us to go farther; that's why it's constructive. We wanted to expand and extend this kind of instructive, ongoing dialog-from all of our clients in the institute to all of our clients in general. This is what has allowed us over the years to develop and continuously update "zero-defect" products, and thus to keep them alive and well in our product range."

For each product, Clarins establishes what it calls a "police record." When information technology makes its appearance and the product files are digitalized, Jacques Courtin orders a computer for his office, to be able to access them at any time.

"If one woman complains, that may be unlucky. Two women and we had better start listening. After the third, we start an investigation; we tell the laboratory to find the reason for-and solution to the problem. All this goes into the product's 'police record.' Our products are continuously tested for effectiveness and endlessly updated. That's also what sets us apart-monitoring each of our products, living with them day-to-day..."

Its unique system of testing and of experimenting in real-life and real-time situations has at times allowed Clarins to make necessary decisions very quickly.

"In the space of a few days, 4 or 5 women from different parts of the country let us know that an eye cream had caused some slight irritation. They had used this product for a long time without any problem whatsoever. We immediately had it pulled from the shelves and started an inquiry. The lab told me the formula had not changed an iota. One by one, the raw materials were checked; the suppliers guaranteed us that their ingredients were exactly the same as always. We scrutinized the product packaging. We were on the lookout for the tiniest little thing. It finally hit us: we immediately contacted the company that supplied the cleaning solution for the pipes that filled our product jars. Without yet knowing about the disruption they'd caused, they told us that they had in fact changed suppliers for one of the elements in their formula. Voilà. That's where the problem came from. It was easy to solve in a short amount of time. We replaced the eye cream in the stores and that was that.

"The 'Clarins pluses' that have led to our success often come from our clients. That's why it is essential to have an institute, where you receive your clients, advise them, apply your products. When we're fortunate enough to receive them again, they might compliment us but they might also say, 'It's good, but...' That 'but' says it all-and will continue to say it all until we improve to the point where every client says, 'It's perfect.' That's the Clarins excellence, the Clarins quality and effectiveness. With our institutes and our client-feedback cards, we're constantly testing, constantly aiming for perfection. That's the difference with Clarins."



This is unique. And it is still-more than ever-the Clarins way.

In 1996, a graduate from a leading Paris business school comes to Clarins to take over the customer service department, so dear to its

founder's heart. "To let you know how important this was to Monsieur Courtin," she explains, "suffice it to say that my office was one of the closest to his. For him, the customer is always right." In this arena, she must let the client have the last word, even if at times she is apparently wrong.

"One day a furious young woman called to tell us she'd had an allergic reaction to our Beauty Flash Balm, the one and only time we had had a complaint. I told Monsieur Courtin, who had a coupon sent to her for the purchase of another product. She called a few days later and talked about emotional distress-said she had to go for thalassotherapy to recover. Renewed discussion with Monsieur Courtin, who said he would cover the cost as long as our insurance company agreed. 'Do you know what a client is worth?' he explained to me. 'Don't forget that each of them holds a part of our future profits. Let's write and tell her that, like all respectable businesses, we have insurance which we have never used. But that in her case, given the gravity of her distress, we're going to contact our insurers, who will no doubt ask for a note from her doctor...' The client never mentioned the incident again."

Today, the Clarins customer service department counts at least 12 full-time employees in France alone who respond to hundreds of calls and letters, not forgetting of course the client feedback cards.

Replicated on a global scale, the worldwide customer service system includes over a hundred team members, with each area manager expected to staff the department locally.

Whether she shops in Lyon or Naples, Hong Kong or Dubai, every woman around the world can share her feedback, ask questions and thereby contribute to perfecting Clarins products.

Jacques Courtin confirms the importance of this dialog. "Clarins has won an incalculable number of awards and prizes: prizes given by journalists, consumers, women's magazines, financial magazines and even banks. Well, do you know which means the most to me? It's the CRM Prize, Consumer Relationship Management, an award for the best customer service system. Now that's what I call taking beauty seriously-we've even created an after-sales service for

cosmetics! That's why we have been a success. I assume women are aware of the fact that Clarins is with them. Others think in terms of business and marketing; we think in terms of the client, respect, service, dialog and relationship."

"A long time ago we were still on Rue Tronchet," Jacques Courtin says with a tender smile, "I was alone in the institute, which was closed Saturday afternoons. An old woman asked to come in. She said she had heard of Clarins products and wanted me to give her some advice. She didn't realize I was the founder. At the time, I had a fresh-cell cream, which I thought would be just right for her distended skin. I explained what the cream did and how to apply it. I made her love the product-she was convinced! She said she wanted to buy it but I suddenly remembered I was alone and didn't have the keys to the cabinet where we kept the products. She was very disappointed. She'd made a special trip and was so counting on getting something, and really needed it. I couldn't let her leave like that. In a treatment cubicle, I found a barely opened tube of mask made from fresh-cell concentrates and gave it to her, on the house. She was ecstatic. About a year later, she came back. She had used the mask according the instructions I'd given her for the cream-in very thin coats. She congratulated me on the product's richness. 'A single tube lasted me almost a year imagine!' I didn't want to contradict her, to remind her that what I'd given her was a mask, which is usually applied in thick layers. Her radiant smile, full of gratitude, is among my most cherished memories."

9.

"You can find lesser quality, but it's more expensive."

It's the early 70s. The Clarins team is growing and taking shape. Enter one of the people who are about to help build the Clarins of today. The CEO of a major cosmetics firm, Monsieur Mesnard shows up one day, on his own initiative, to offer to work with Jacques Courtin.

"Clarins was far from the size of the company he worked for," Jacques Courtin recounts. "But he wanted to resign because, he said, it hadn't kept some of the promises it made to its clients. He couldn't stand being an accomplice to betrayal. He said, 'I have to quit. If I stay I won't be able to live with myself.' I liked his integrity."

By changing its distribution channel Monsieur Mesnard takes Clarins down a very decisive path. "I was sorry to have to pull out of pharmacies, where I enjoyed excellent relations, but Monsieur Mesnard proved to me that for major brands the best sales-figures came from perfume stores. He made me take this important change in direction the future of Clarins was at stake. 'Only selective perfumeries will put the entire world at your is controlled by law: once you're in you can't be sold by doorstep. That's where Clarins belongs. But,' he said, 'this other types of retailers. If you choose this route, you have to give up the rest.'"

In France, beauty industry professionals refer to system follows clear rules: brands select their points of sale perfumeries as "selective distribution" channels. The according to criteria such as location, décor and type of service and advice available. In return, they pledge not to sell through other channels, such as pharmacies and supermarkets.



Thus, Clarins enters the world of selective perfumeries. "Not as easy as it sounds," Jacques Courtin recalls, "since natural products weren't the trend at the time. We were the first, the precursors."

Little by little, the company evolves from word of mouth phenomenon to well-known brand, the idyll unfolding admirably under win-win conditions. The perfume shops are happy to enhance their own reputations by offering products known for quality, high standards and effectiveness. Clarins is delighted to collaborate with a highly professional milieu whose values and philosophy so closely reflect its own. As the client cards continue to deliver feedback, the products are constantly improved, and the Clarins brand is increasingly appreciated.

However, the cosmetics field is undergoing a momentous revolution. No longer the province of privileged elites, it is quickly being democratized, its products and services appealing and accessible to more and more women. Attracted by this potential, investors and venture capitalists step in, eventually changing the very nature of the industry itself.

"We were seen as a brand based on great professionalism, respected for our high standards. And our products were also among the least expensive in the store. I thought this was a plus. On all our packaging, I put the motto 'The best products in the world available to the largest number of people.' But believe it or not, in the eyes of some perfumeries back then, this was a drawback."



"Thirty years ago, perfumeries were, for the most part, small shops run by women sincerely dedicated to their craft. Clients felt as if they were visiting a good friend; they asked for advice, opinions; advice and opinions, which they then followed to the letter, because they had trusted these women and saw them as the true professionals that they were. Under these circumstances, interest in beauty products kept increasing. Nevertheless, some perfume shops took advantage of their clients' trust and enthusiasm by pushing primarily the most expensive products. Making a profit became more important than looking after the client's best interests. This hurt the image of the perfume shop and helped in the development of other distribution channels. But to this day, our most favored point of sale is the advice-dispensing perfumery. When it comes to beauty products, they're still the real experts. This is why I chose to go that route back then. In turn, by entrusting them with our reputable, affordable products we helped them expand their client base. We wanted to democratize beauty."



For Jacques Courtin, a perfumer has the ideal job-"a dream job!" and the perfumery should be seen as every woman's privileged realm.

"Perfume specialists are much more skilled than they realize. Seeing clients all day long, listening to their concerns and suggestions and sometimes even their secrets, cultivating trusting relationships on rather personal subjects, when you think of it. All this requires exceptional, intuitive knowledge. Then they take what they've heard and relay it to the manufacturer. All the while, they're giving advice, trying to find the best, most effective product for each woman's needs. What a beautiful profession!

"That said, some don't operate like this. Some will do anything just

to sell the most expensive item even if it means steering a woman away from her favorites. Certain brand profits come not from the positive marketing efforts but from smear campaigns against their competitors. The stores that go along with this don't realize that they're actually hurting themselves and ultimately the entire profession. Because when you get a woman to change to a costlier product that winds up disappointing her you're left with an unhappy customer and possibly no customer at all. Plus, we know that high price does not necessarily mean high quality. What counts is product effectiveness and client satisfaction. Those are the only things that will keep her coming back not only to a product but also to your store. I always have this vision of that decisive moment when a woman scoops the last drop of cream from the jar and declares, 'I have to get more.' Our strength lies in our quality. Her decision is based on real factors: Did she like the cream? Did the perfume appeal to her? Did the product keep its promises? "Clarins's prestige comes from its high standards. I don't sell dreams; I sell beauty treatment products and results. If my brand makes women dream, that's because it stands for effectiveness."



Jacques Courtin asks his family and friends to visit different perfume shops and determine the extent to which women were directed toward the more expensive brands.

"It didn't take long-we had our answer within several weeks. It's true that this happened in certain cases, but they were fortunately very rare. There were some companies that paid sales assistants to favor their products; and they did this not by speaking well of that company but by denigrating their rivals! As I've said, this was damaging to our profession as a whole and especially to their individual perfumeries, which carried and stood by those products. One of my test-shoppers reported that when she asked for Clarins the sales assistant tried to sell her a very costly cream instead, saying, 'Do not compare a Rolls-Royce with a Volkswagen.' When the shopper held firm, the salesperson went as far as warning, 'As you wish-but you're going to regret your decision.'

"Our products were very good, but not expensive enough. Once in a meeting, one of our directors suggested raising our prices. What kind of idea was that! Is that where all this was leading? It turned out he was joking, of course. But how absurd... To me, charging a reasonable price is a way of showing respect for the client. We have always used the best possible ingredients. We have never skimped on quantity or quality. It's true that in the beginning our packaging wasn't the most luxurious but there was a reason for that: what really mattered was the client herself. She threw the box and jar away but she used the product on her skin."



"You can find lesser quality than Clarins, but it's more expensive," Jacques Courtin sometimes jokes. However, with all the humor in the world, he is not a man to succumb to a rule he finds unfair. He prefers diplomacy to capitulation. At the key moments of his life, he always seems to have the perfect parable, capped by the perfect moral, to make his point:

"When dealing with the perfume shops I used to sometimes tell an anecdote I call 'The Wine Waiter's Fable': I was in an award-winning restaurant with people I wanted to pay tribute to. To show them how important they were to me I ordered one of the best vintages of one of the best wines-with a price tag to match. The wine waiter moved closer to me and discretely asked, 'Are you sure this is the wine you want, monsieur? If you don't mind, I'd suggest this one.' And he showed me one on the wine list that was almost two times less expensive. I thought, you, my young man, are trying to make me change my mind because you probably don't have the one I asked for. I didn't budge and repeated my choice, sure that I had him cornered.

"He then says, 'Very well, monsieur, I'll bring it right out.' I was astonished, and asked, 'You have it?' He immediately understood what I had suspected him of, walked away-in a very dignified manner, I might. add-and returned with both bottles. Smiling from

ear to ear, he answered, 'Of course I have it, monsieur. If I suggested the other one, it's simply because it goes better with your meal.' Not only did I follow his advice that day, but also from then on, whenever I had to invite people to dinner I went to that restaurant and gave the wine waiter free rein-trusted him completely because it was obvious that he had my best interests at heart. I must have gone back there once a month for ten years. Do the arithmetic. Conclusion: as with Clarins, it's the client that counts, not the sale!"



The anecdote ends there; "The Wine Waiter's Fable" lives on. "When I used to tell this story in professional meetings the perfumery experts would nod their heads, but some of them didn't really get the connection with their own situations. It was up to me to point it out: it's better to advise a client honestly as if she were a close friend than to spend your time chasing sales records."

Does establishing trust keep clients loyal?

"When you give a customer bad advice even one single time there's a risk of losing her forever. Do you think there are many women who can afford to be loyal to exorbitantly expensive creams? No. Better to leave them to women who come ask for them on their own, maybe after seeing an attractive advertisement. For someone in search of a quality beauty product with choice ingredients and proven results at a reasonable price-why force her to take something else? Then loyalty comes naturally.

In the context of his "education" mission, Jacques Courtin accepts to sit on the 'Comité français des produits de beauté¹² . "I had to do something for the perfumeries, help them to build their reputation. Sitting on an advocate committee for their profession was my way of showing I was on their side. When I was asked to be president, I accepted."

Vera Strubi, now president of Thierry Mugler Perfumes, met

Jacques Courtin during this time: "He was very perceptive. He realized that no matter how good our products are, if part of the distribution channel isn't up to par, our full potential will not be achieved. So he started thinking about how to increase the standing of perfume shop assistant. Working alongside the union, he established a training program that led to a diploma: 'the beauty passport'. This also helped the sector to develop a common language for beauty products, no matter which brand was being discussed. At the time, each company held a half-day session about its own products. Later, the program went farther, focusing on skincare itself. Jacques led this movement, a perfect reflection of the importance he placed on respecting the consumer. Under his guidance, the industry went through a happy period. The brands got along well with each other-less competition, more common ground."

In the slipstream of this spirit, a major ad-campaign is launched. "I was very pleased with the slogan," Jacques Courtin says: "'Trust your perfume shop. Its profession is beauty.' We had to go back to basics, highlight the perfumery personnel and emphasize their professionalism. It was important for their clients but it was even more important for the personnel themselves. First and foremost, they had to remember that they possessed knowledge, talent, to be shared."

"Jacques calculated that if you added up the surface area of all the perfume-shop windows in France," Vera Strubi says, "you'd wind up with more potential ad-space 12 French Beauty Products Committee than that used for a presidential election poster campaign. He then asked shop personnel to take part actively in enhancing the standing of their profession. Almost everyone said yes."

Thanks to its quality and innovation, Clarins steadily becomes a major brand. "When we started selling abroad," Jacques Courtin explains, "we asked our sales assistants in France to share a simple fact with their clients: overseas in the United States, for example-because of transport costs, customs duties and export charges, our products are considerably more expensive than certain American goods that represent luxury in France. Can you imagine having to justify our reasonable prices?!"

10.

"Everything starts with the word no."

1974. The Clarins company is 20 years old, roughly the same age as Christian Courtin. Christian remembers his youth with pleasure: "My father wasn't a big talker. He was swamped with work. I really spent time with him on vacation-in Biarritz, Moriond, Chalifert; that's when he was available, present. I went fishing with him. We had a country house on the Marne River and we used to go there with my parents' friends. They loved good food; those were such joyful times, filled with humor. My father was very athletic. He'd been an excellent judoka, even doing hard-floor demonstrations. He was the one who made us want to play tennis, ski... In summer, he sent me to camp in the United States, not only to learn English because he knew it was important to speak several languages-but also so that I could water ski. When I was 18, he gave me a trip to Asia... I loved my father's Napoleon style desk. I have it in my house today."

"There's a great story about him," Jacques Courtin says tenderly. "He was very young and we were feeding him. As you do with little kids, we were counting off the spoonfuls: 'This one's for mommy'-he opens his mouth and swallows the spoonful-'This one's for daddy' he does the same-'This one's for...' We had almost finished his entire plate like this and for the very last spoonful I said, 'And finally, this one's for Christian.' At which point he whipped his head around, looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'No, not me! I don't like that stuff!'"



Christian successfully completes his postgraduate business studies, including an internship in the food industry where he leaves his mark by suggesting a seemingly "handwritten" jam-jar label widely used to this day. He then sets out to look for his first job.

"Since I knew I'd be called up for military service I asked my father if I could come and work for him. He said yes but wanted a good reason to justify the hire. 'You like traveling? Well, you're about to do a round-the-world beauty tour. You'll see what the market's like out there from product to consumer. The best way to understand export.'

In fact, Christian Courtin's initial stint at Clarins was in 1968, a kind of pre-university internship. "My first job was to help the head of the stockroom, Monsieur Miet, a leftist union-man, through and through. Later he became a union spokesman. He took me under his wing, very proud to be supervising the boss's son. One morning he said to me, 'Tomorrow I'm going on strike-a show of support for French strikers everywhere!' Then he added, without even cracking a smile, 'But I'll be here Saturday to make up my lost time.' I liked that man a lot. He had some pretty strong ideas on a lot of things. My father had a tiny Fiat 500. One day Miet said to him, 'Monsieur, you can't drive that car. It's not a proper car for a boss.' My father then bought himself a Peugeot 604 sedan.

"Miet explained Communism to me and wanted everyone to be rich. How could I disagree? He was very devoted to Clarins, and incredibly honest. It was a great start for me."

*At the beginning of the 70s, when Christian Courtin officially begins working at Clarins, the beauty institute is still at number 35 Rue Tronchet, the administrative offices at number 23 and Simone's legendary cafeteria at number 29. Jacques has just acquired a factory in Corneilles-en-Parisis, north of Paris.

"Jacque Courtin calls me," remembers Jean Roux. "He says, 'I just bought a factory. It's a direct shot from the Saint-Lazare train

station. Half an hour away. Let's go and see!" So we took the train together. I must say I was a little surprised at this new direction, and more than mildly skeptical. In the space of several years, Clarins had become a flourishing beauty treatment center with a steadily growing turnover. Now, as a factory owner, it was going from a service company to an industrial concern with all the problems that would entail. It would be a completely different world.

"In these huge, empty buildings we went from one room to another, from hangar to stockroom to assembly shop. Jacques Courtin was enthused. I was bewildered. It was only later that day that it hit me: the foundations of the 'Clarins Empire' had just been laid-for good. It's true that heading a company is an on-going gamble, but Jacques Courtin was always right on target: his prediction of what and where the market would be in the long term, his estimate of the kind and amount of investment he would need, his general vision of his field. That's positive proof that he's a born business-leader."

Jacques Courtin's version of the story is more prosaic. "I had one goal: improvement. One obsession: beauty. I also had two means to those ends: treatment methods, equipment and products. I created methods including the treatment devices and especially, I created products. The treatments were for a small, local, elite population of women who could come to our center. The products of course were for the women in the entire world. There was no denying the importance of the products, but because the methods were so effective I didn't want to give them up. So I adapted them for home use. What they really are is a technical, professional way of applying the products. To me, this represented the future."



Clarins's distribution strategy was short and to the point: 150 points of sale in France, half of them beauty institutes.

"I experienced the turning point orchestrated by Monsieur Mesnard first-hand," Christian Courtin says. "At the time we kept hearing,

'Your products are good, but not easy to find.' Monsieur Mesnard convinced my father to take the selective-perfumery route. He'd been the head of the largest beauty products company, so my father had faith in what he said. Along with Madame Brient, a formidable sales director, they set the groundwork for what would become the Clarins of today. Up to then I had seen my father as merely the head of a company with offices on Rue Tronchet and a factory in Corneilles. It wasn't until I actually worked at his side that I fully realized who he was and what he was doing."



Christian is sent off around the world.

Almost twenty years after its official launch, Clarins was only present in a few countries. "In the Model'Bust days, Bubbe, a hair salon in Brussels, asked if they could sell it," Jacques Courtin remembers. "I'd met them at the Women and Beauty trade show and they wanted to be my sales rep in Belgium. They distributed my products everywhere. There were then some inroads into Switzerland, Italy and Germany with the pulsed air massage. But it was really Christian who opened up our international market."

First Lebanon then further into Switzerland and Germany.

"Our export director, Monsieur Guipet, taught me a lot," Christian says. "Then he left, and I was a one man show in export, until 1976, when the department became the 'international division' and we hired some very experienced people especially women. Unbelievably, except for one or two, they are all still with us today! I remember that Clarins wasn't well known at all outside France. There was a TV adventure series with a cross-eyed lion named Clarence that was very popular around the world. Sometimes I'd meet people who'd say, 'Your company name-you mean like the lion?' I would then have to spell it for them. In fact, that's what gave me the idea to use the letters in 'Clarins' to define our philosophy: 'C as in Communication, L as in Link, A as in Authenticity, R as in Respect, I as in Innovation, N as in Nature, S

as in Service."

Clarins was not an easy sell. In those days, plant-based products were not nearly as popular as they are today. "The answer was often no" Christian Courtin remembers. "But I didn't get discouraged. As my father says, everything starts with the word no."

*Everything starts with the word no? "Of course!" Jacques Courtin answers. "It's simple: if someone says no you can immediately ask why. It's pretty certain that with a little persistence you'll wind up finding out the reason. At that point, you have all you need for adjusting your argument to fit the situation; you're suddenly armed to win. That's why, as paradoxical as it seems, I'm convinced that Clarins has gone farther, and better, as a result of criticism than as a result of compliments. When someone says, 'Your products are very good,' that makes you happy but it ends there. But if they dare point out the little detail that could be improved, well, you change this or that and get closer to perfection! That's true in everything and for everyone. When I'm in a restaurant and the chef comes over to ask how my meal is I can say just 'Fine, thank you' and get rid of him, but that doesn't help him do his best. On the other hand if I tell him, 'Maybe a little too well done, a little tough' or 'Not hot enough,' the next day the same dish will probably be better even if he cursed me the night before! Sincerely asking people's advice is a form of modesty, but it also reflects a desire to be the best you can be. Criticism is never pleasant to hear-but it's really the only way to be constructive."

Everything starts with the word no. More than his opinion, this is one of Jacques Courtin's mottos, of which he never tires. As we have seen, his personal catalogue of basic psychological principles, born of experience and observation, often takes the form of favorite sayings that have guided him through life in general and as well as work.

"When a woman arrived late for her appointment at the institute we

couldn't do a complete session. She would start to grumble: 'I won't stand for that! I was only 15 minutes late, for Heaven's sake! What is this a train station? And anyway, it's not my fault-I rushed to get here but there were traffic jams...' When there was a real problem, I would receive her in my office. I always began our conversation with the magic words: 'You're right.' 'You're right' is a sentence that everyone should be required to learn-human relations would take a huge leap forward. 'You're right; it's unacceptable to have to shorten your session.' Usually, the level of tension in the room would drop immediately. 'Your displeasure is proof that you value our treatments. To thank you for that, I'd like to give you a product.' A smile would creep onto her face. I could then go a little further, with a smile on mine: 'I'd also like to explain something. If your session hadn't been shortened, I would have been forcing the next client to wait 15 minutes for hers. Imagine yourself in her shoes-it wouldn't be fair to penalize you that way, especially if you had arrived on time.' More often than not, that did the trick, and the woman often wound up being among our most punctual clients from then on. If I hadn't started with those words, she would have been disgruntled, on the war path, and we would have gotten nowhere."



Jacques Courtin makes it a point of honor to live with his products on a daily basis, his sense of detail and perfection leaving many amazed. "One day in the mid-70s," Vincent Bolloré says, "I was at the Racing Club, a tennis club in Paris's Bois de Boulogne. I played there often with my brother, then usually stayed and grabbed a quick bite. In the locker room, I caught a glimpse of a guy's back-it was full of perfectly aligned little band-aids. Must have been 14 or 15 of them. I wondered, what is it with this guy-does he have pimples or something? I pointed him out to my brother, who seemed as intrigued as me, and then I forgot about it. A couple months later the head of an American group told me he wanted to buy a small business on Rue Tronchet that he'd heard of and wondered if I could contact the owner for him. I made an appointment and when I walked in, there was the band-aid man! I

told him why I'd come and Jacques Courtin answered that he still had plans for his company and no desire to sell. I said OK and at the end of the discussion gave in to my curiosity about that day in the club. His explanation couldn't have been more matter-of-fact: 'The band-aids? Those were tests for my products.' Tests? 'Yes. I test my products.' I couldn't hide my surprise: 'You mean to say you test them yourself?' He answered as if it was the most natural thing in the world-'I'm in the best position to do so, don't you think? The boss has to set the example.'

After that day, Vincent Bolloré often runs into Jacques Courtin at the Racing Club. "We became friends. We've had lunch together several times. He's a great guy and I admire what he's done. You have to respect someone who has built a company of that size based on beauty products. In my family's business, we're now working on the seventh generation. He's created everything from scratch. For the moment, he has his sons with him and, who knows, maybe one day his four granddaughters will take over. This is the beginning of a dynasty. Even his private life amazes me. He's not looking to make the society page, doesn't go out much, stays home with his family. The nicest person you'd ever want to meet. I don't see him often, but I really love the guy. Everyone talks about the quality of his business and how much they respect him. He deserves all that. He's incredibly generous, always been so nice to me, even in difficult times. Whether my stock was at 500 or 20, he's always been so nice, so friendly."

Fueled by Jacques Courtin's creativity, the Clarins marketing machine is churning. Fueled by Clarins itself, the international division is out conquering the world. Christian opens Tahiti, Nouméa, Singapore, Australia, and, just before returning to Paris, Dubai.

"I remember that while I was traveling there was an export manager from another big cosmetics company who was doing almost the exact same trip. We ran into each other everywhere-in planes, hotels and met with the same people, thanks to the same contacts. The only difference was that I didn't have to file a report with anyone. I could make my own decisions on the spot. He constantly had to run things by his management, which of course made him lose a lot of valuable time. I wound up winning on all scores. I was able to choose partners who built Clarins with us throughout the world."

Christian has some comical moments. "A South African distributor asked for our products and said their rep would come to Paris to meet me (for once, it was 'the other guy' getting on a plane). At the time, I had a puppy I'd named Opium-after the Saint Laurent perfume that had just come out. He was in my office, running around, yapping from time to time. The discussion took place, a contract was signed, and soon afterward, I went to South Africa myself, where this same person received me. I then found out that during that meeting in Paris, my dog had eaten the tassels right off this man's very expensive shoes! In the interest of the contract, he'd remained stoic. I was pretty embarrassed, though we wound up laughing about it. At that moment, I really knew the balance of power had shifted. Clarins's image and status had changed-we had arrived."



Clarins adds markets to its distribution sphere and products to its catalogue.

"This was about the time we came out with the Energizing Emulsion For Tired Legs," Jacques Courtin says. "It's still sold. The very same, identical lotion: it's a perfect formula. Magic. As is often the case with natural products, there is no need to change a thing.

"Plus, this product has a beautiful story behind it: Général de

Bénouville was head of Jours de France, a very popular magazine of the day owned by the aviation magnate Marcel Dassault. The general sent me quite a formal invitation to a VIP lunch, which I accepted. When I arrived he greeted me with open arms-'Ah, Jacques Courtin. It's you!' and sat me down next to him. Finally, he said, 'I bet you're wondering why you're here. Well, it's because I think of you every evening. This declaration was followed by an intrigued, somewhat embarrassed silence. He continued: 'I suffered a major injury while parachuting. I'm a little better now but it's been agonizingly painful, especially at night. Recently I discovered your Energizing Emulsion For Tired Legs. Thanks to you, I don't suffer at night any more. And, at last, I can sleep.'

The story does not end there. During a trip to New York, Général de Bénouville realizes that he has forgotten to pack his Energizing Emulsion. With the product's profit margin already squeezed by its many expensive ingredients, prohibitive import costs preclude its sale in the U.S. The general however is far from ready to spend a sleepless night. He decides to pull strings among his contacts in the aeronautics field and has several bottles brought over on the next Paris-New York transatlantic flight. When Jacques Courtin hears of this, he gives the general an entire case of Energizing Emulsion For Tired Legs with a tag reading Special Vintage Général de Bénouville.

On the subject of products, training director Nicole Kewe adds, "During those years, Monsieur Courtin-who up to then swore only by plants-started to lean toward other ingredients. He was one of the first to show interest in fresh cells, used by doctors specializing in rejuvenation. He made a marvelous cream with them-remarkably effective and fabulously successful. Then yet again, his intuition was working overtime: at one point, he had animal fresh cells replaced plant ones. This was several years before that became a requirement; he's always been a visionary, even in something like that!"

"I felt tempted at the time to diversify my ingredient sources," Jacques Courtin explains. "But I wound up coming back almost exclusively to plants. There is an answer for everything in the plant world. With biology especially, you see the law of diminishing returns: effects gradually lessen and germs adapt. However, plants lose none of their effects and none of their powers. Biological effectiveness can vary, but not plant effectiveness. Plants possess a major strength, which is consistency.

To support and reinforce these convictions it is time for one of Clarins's most notable figures to enter the scene. From 1976 on, Lionel de Benetti will make Clarins products what they are today.

11.

"First, do no harm."

"'First, do no harm'-in Latin, *Primum non nocere* this was both my father's motto and is the medical profession's absolute underlying principle," Jacques Courtin says. "This notion is certainly essential in the field of cosmetics, especially as we are not treating illness. Where beauty is concerned, you have to tell the truth, your promises have to be honest. This must be the very basis of beauty treatment. The two fundamental rules in this field are first, do not harm, and second, do not take advantage of your clients' vulnerabilities, do not exploit their deep desires to be attractive. These are naturally the rules, which have governed all our decisions about Clarins products. This is what appealed to Lionel de Benetti about Clarins, and convinced him to come and work with us."

At the time, Lionel de Benetti was a young chemical engineer. He had cut his teeth in two cosmetics companies where he'd had scant opportunity to apply his talent to the fullest. "In the first I was a compound chemist; in the second, a manufacturing director. I was hardly ever allowed to go to the lab and work on formulas. A supplier we both used told me about Clarins-I'd never heard the name before. He said they were looking for a lab director. He also said Jacques Courtin was pretty demanding. But when I met him I liked him immediately. He told me, 'You're 29. You're young. You're dynamic. You seem to understand Clarins. You like what you do. I don't think I'm mistaken in this. I'll hire you on a trial basis, OK? It's up to you to show me what you have.' But he's a man who always

plans ahead and I later learned that he'd already budgeted for my severance pay. That was over 30 years ago."



When Lionel de Benetti arrives, the Douceur line is about to be launched. Orders have been taken. The products have been manufactured, packaged, and readied for delivery.

"We called it the 'salmon' line, because of the color of the jar. It was for sensitive skin. It had been tested of course, but, I felt, not enough to prove that it was safe for ultra-sensitive cases. I shared my doubts with Jacques Courtin; when you deal with very sensitive skin, you have to be more careful than ever. Amazingly enough, hypoallergenic products are often the ones that cause the greatest number of allergic reactions. Why? Because since allergy prone people use them, there's a significantly increased allergy risk right from the outset. The statistics bear this out. I asked for a new series of tests. Jacques Courtin was with me all the way; he stopped everything while we waited for the results which were less than satisfactory. Without the slightest second thought, he had everything destroyed and we postponed the launch. First, do no harm-we were in total agreement."

This is, moreover, what gives Jacques Courtin the idea of making sure that all his product formulae are on file at Paris's Hôpital Saint-Louis. "They're specialized in allergies. That's where people with them go. Imagine you have a reaction in the middle of the night or on a weekend. If the hospital has the exact, complete list of all our ingredients it's child's play to determine if the culprit comes from us or not, and to treat the condition accordingly."



Jacques Courtin was not yet the captain of industry he would later become. "He gave me the chance to show what I could do. Meetings

took place among a very small group of us, and we told it like it was, with directness that has always been his hallmark. Decisions were taken on the spot. Jacques Courtin would share his ideas and at times they seemed pretty daring-the sky was the limit with him. He never wanted to hear the word 'impossible.' We always started out with a nucleus of deliberation. Then we went further. We acted. He always played that role: he knew what he wanted. He didn't let go and then I had to pull it off. For the hand cream-which took over 150 formulae to get right-he told me, 'I don't want a hand cream. I want a beauty glove that can't be seen and leaves no trace.' And that's what he got. The ideas came from Jacques Courtin.. What I did was put them to work."

"A good hand cream," says Jacques Courtin, "is the hardest thing to make. The hand has two kinds of skin: the top tends to be dry; the palm tends to be moist. So you have to deal with two opposite needs. You have to nourish the skin without leaving a trace-when the hand picks up a glass, for example. The more you require from a formula, the longer the testing takes and the better your chance of winding up with a perfect product. In 30 years and this is the exception to the rule for us-we have not had to improve this hand cream. We have simply not found a better formula. Neither has anyone else."



When talking about chemists, Jacques Courtin calls up another parable: "Take bread. It's incredibly simple: flour, water, yeast, a pinch of salt. Yet, no two loaves are alike. For some you'll go several miles out of your way. Then there are the others. A formula is a recipe. But most of all it's a skill. Lionel has this skill. To say nothing of the fact that you need only four ingredients for bread; a beauty cream can have 20, 30, even more!"

"There's a long list of ingredients you can use in cosmetics," Lionel de Benetti adds. All you have to do is combine them for optimal effectiveness and pleasure. Jacques Courtin never set limits either on his imagination or on cost. I've always been able to use the best

and, if I wanted, even the most expensive ingredients. The only thing that matters to him is the result, because his priority is his clients-he puts himself in their place. This unwavering attitude is one of the secrets to his success.

Thus, one day in 1985, on the métro with Lionel de Benetti, Jacques Courtin comes up with a challenge: "What if we set out to make the best product in the world? What if we put all the ingredients that can have an effect on the youthfulness of skin into a single product?"

"That's impossible," Lionel de Benetti answers.

"Impossible?" Jacques Courtin asks, irritated at what sounds like an automatic rebuff. "Why?"

"Because some of those ingredients are soluble only in water and others only in oil. So you couldn't combine them-they couldn't sit side by side."

For Jacques Courtin, who thinks that everything starts with the word no, there surely has to be a solution. "Well then, we'll put them in two separate containers! The client will mix them later on, when she's ready to use them. Look at the hydrolipid film¹⁴: didn't Mother Nature do the same thing?

Lionel is still doubtful. But he likes the idea. Double Serum in about to be born.

"The idea was sound. Brilliant even," Lionel de Benetti acknowledges. "But it carried with it a lot of surprises and problems. First, we made a list of all the best possible active

ingredients. Then we worked out a hydro component containing the water-soluble ingredients, and a lipo component-containing the oil-solubles. All of which gave us, as Jacques Courtin envisaged, the best anti-age product in the world since it promoted the five vital functions responsible for young-looking skin. The only thing left to do, right before use, was to take three drops from each of the two separate bottles, mix them in your hand and apply the result to your face."

Apart for the fact that the mixture is not as intended when consumers do not measure out the exact dose of each.

"It was the feedback cards that alerted us to the problem; women were telling us that sometimes one bottle was empty while the other still had some serum left. And what surprised us most drove us most crazy-was that it wasn't always, for instance, the hydro bottle that got used up first, or vice-versa!"

The team goes back to the drawing board and realizes what went wrong. "We'd done the tests in a lab. The bottles were always on a flat surface. Everything went perfectly as planned. At home, women were holding the bottle in one hand and pouring into the other. The product wasn't always coming out exactly in the same way or in the same amount."

The solution was a pump system, which would deliver the correct doses automatically. "Everything worked out in the end. Double Serum is one of our flagship products. The first version contained 18 active ingredients; today we're up to 42 and constantly incorporating newly discovered ones. It's really the only beauty product on the market that can solve problems caused by both natural aging programmed into the genes-and environment-induced aging-linked to lifestyle. It's the most complete product certainly the result of our expertise but, because it's endlessly improved and updated, enriched and perfected, it is also the product that best reflects Clarins's values and philosophy, our desire always to do

better, always to be on the cutting edge of science."



Clarins's other favorite subject is of course weight loss. Recognized as an absolute specialist in the field, Clarins wrote its very rulebook. "Clarins was a pioneer," Lionel de Benetti says, "thanks to Jacques Courtin. His intuition took us into uncharted territory-which he then charted!"

"Women are constantly preoccupied about being thin," says Jacques Courtin. "But for a long time people mixed everything up. A woman would say, 'I have cellulite' which would have meant she had a disease, literally an inflammation of the cells, which produces that well-known lumpy look. But I observed something: when a woman who thought she had cellulite lay down in a prone position, the orange-peel bumps disappeared. So I started wondering what kind of 'disease' this was that could be cured by just lying down as opposed to the other, real, phenomenon where weight clearly played a role."



Jacques Courtin takes his study of 'cellulite' as far as possible, consulting the best doctors and surgeons and finally becoming a highly articulate specialist in the matter himself.

"It's not the right word. It should be called celluloadipose tissue. Actually, every woman thinks she has cellulite. That's a mistake. You take the most beautiful woman in the world and press onto her skin, you'll see that orange peel effect. (Like making dimples on a baby's bottom when you hold it on your arms.) But it disappears when you stop pressing. That's cellulo-adipose tissue distributed evenly throughout a women's body over the muscle mass. And totally normal. This fat-reserve necessary for possible pregnancies is also what gives women their 'feminine' curves, their soft lines that

smooth over what would otherwise be harsher muscular contours. Cellulo-adipose tissue is the body's essential feminine 'signature'; without it, a woman's body would look like a man's.

But why, then, is it so unsightly? "Fatty tissue is particularly dense from the waist down," Jacques Courtin continues. "It's very pronounced on the buttocks and then progressively thins out as you go toward the ankles. It is held in place by an enveloping, connective net whose fibers are joined, deep down, to the muscles, and, on the surface, to the skin preventing the tissue from succumbing to gravity and falling to the feet. If there is too much fatty tissue, its weight causes it to 'spill over' the net's 'mesh' and show up on the skin as orange-peel lumps.

"Think about fatty tissue as a balloon enclosed in tight netting. If you blow up the balloon too much it will start sticking out through the holes in the mesh. This is a plump woman's 'cellulite.' If you reduce the size of the net so as to reduce the size of the balloon, this is a thin woman's 'cellulite'.

"Now, when a woman lies down, the tissue's weight is no longer a factor, and the bumps go away. However, when she's standing and pulls up on the skin around her hip, even if by half an inch, they go away as well! So 'cellulite' is related to too much fatty tissue but also with relaxing the internal, connecting net that encloses it-or with distending the skin, which is the external envelope containing it all.

"Cellulite is fat that more or less overflows the more or less tight net encasing it."

To depict the phenomenon, Jacques Courtin has a perfect

comparison: the capiton, which in French means "tuft"- "like on those comfortable English armchairs," he says. "I was looking at one of them and it hit me that this was an excellent way to explain this notorious cellulite." He coined the term in the field of beauty care and, the term capiton is now part of the industry vernacular.

"We are of course concerned with its aesthetic aspect, with the 'balloon' and the 'net'. A very firm, sturdy balloon will not give in under the net's pressure. In other words the firmer the skin, the less it falls victim to cellulite. The answer therefore lies in toning the skin as well as in reducing its fatty tissue.

"But be careful: pummel the skin too much and it distends. The connective net then becomes a ribbon, and the bumps appear even on a prone body."



Jacques Courtin created an initial glimpse of the future with Aminsvit gel, a product designed to slim and, for the first time, to firm. With Lionel de Benetti's help, he will follow his vision through to the end. "When a woman stands up the cellulite appears. When she lies down it goes away. With this simple observation, Jacques Courtin sent us on our mission," Lionel de Benetti remembers. "He wanted a product that could reduce fat whilst firming and toning. For the first time we were interested not only in fatty tissue but also in what was covering it: the skin. That's what led to the Body Shaping Cream."

And with it, a set of seemingly simple yet essential step-by-step rules for a better figure. "By then I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that women should give up hot baths," Jacques Courtin says. Heat weakens the skin; it is a determining factor in cellulite. If you really want to take a hot bath, keep it under 99 degrees Fahrenheit. For firmness, I recommend finishing off a shower with a spurt of cool water, about 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit, from your feet to your thighs.

"As for the breasts, we turned the use of body exfoliators into a normal, natural process, even for sensitive skin. You see, the skin has to be rubbed to be resilient and exfoliation is perfect for that.

"Look at my hand. The back of a hand is made from what is called dorsal skin-the same as on our backs. The palm is made from ventral skin-like we have on our stomachs. In general, dorsal skin is infinitely more hardwearing than ventral because when our distant ancestors walked on all fours the skin on their backs was more exposed to aggressions and scratches. Now, the skin of the palm is constantly rubbing against something: touching, patting, stroking. The result is that it firms and thickens, sometimes too much to the point of getting calluses.

"That's why a brassiere should be big enough to let the chest move ever so slightly. By rubbing against the fabric, the skin becomes firmer, more resilient and thus better able to envelop the breasts, shelter them, contain them, support them and give them shape."



As for Lionel de Benetti, the Multi-Comfort AntiPollution Fluid was his idea. "A practical response to an obvious need," he says. "When we launched it at the beginning of the '90s a lot of our competitors laughed. Since then, they've copied us. We blazed a trail. I'm rather proud to think a whole cosmetics category originated with Clarins, even though I know we've always been steps ahead. The ones who did believe in us at the time were the journalists and they followed us closely."

Talk of journalists brings an amused smile to Lionel de Benetti's face. "That reminds me of a funny story. It was at the very beginning. Jacques Courtin had sensed that journalists would understand how much of a pioneer Clarins was, and how they themselves had the power to pass the word on to their readers. Early on, he'd seen that the only way to get a cosmetics brand known is to have it mentioned in the press. He had said to me, 'If we work together I'll include you in these interviews because

journalists need technical explanations. A company has to earn its articles.' We were able to schedule a meeting with a very influential reporter and Jacques Courtin decided to take us to Laurent, an eminent Parisian restaurant. No doubt thinking the journalist and I were Jacques Courtin's guests, the maître d'hôtel handed us menus without the prices marked, as is done in this type of elegant establishment. I was busy speaking probably describing a product and didn't want to stop, so I quickly glanced at the menu and said, 'I'll have what Madame is having.' Only, without knowing it, Madame had ordered the most expensive item-a lobster salad. And that's when I saw Jacques Courtin throw me a look that said 'anger' and 'amusement' at the same time. I had no idea what was going on until the monumental cart arrived bearing the two lobsters-to be carved up before our eyes next to Monsieur Courtin's artichoke heart. By then it was too late to turn back. Clarins was far from rich at the time, but we sure did laugh about that. To this day, all one of us has to do is say the word lobster and the laughter starts all over again!"

12.

"For a woman, to be attractive is to be alive."

"Jacques Courtin is not a show-off," says Lorraine Bolloré, longtime beauty-section editor of Vogue. "His centers of interest, outside of beauty, are his family and his business. He doesn't care about fame. You can't help admiring him."

What did Jacques Courtin do to have such enduring loyalty from the press? "It's because he was a pioneer!" Lorraine Bolloré declares. He explored all aspects of the industry, was always ahead of the pack. Oils, weight loss, cellulite (which he was the first to talk about), facial exercises, plants everything that could be done to improve a woman's face and figure. His products soared above the rest. That's why women were so faithful to them. He is so sensitive to what women want, so resolute in pursuing it.

"And his Eau Dynamisante! I remember I was visiting someone in the hospital and her roommate rubbed herself down daily with Eau Dynamisante. This surprised me. She explained that at least for those two minutes every day she could forget about her suffering. The product had an effect-fleeting as it was on her body but especially on her spirits. The fragrance just carries you away; it truly is a blast of dynamism. When you're a journalist, how can you do anything but write about this, anything but bow down before it, hats off?

Lorraine Bolloré is 19 years old when she first crosses Jacques Courtin's path. "I was freelancing for Vogue. My editor-in-chief wanted a report on beauty institutes. I went from one to the other, including of course Clarins. The setting left something to be desired but beyond that, there was this man, his words, and his presence. He was right out there, 'in the field.' The attention he paid to his practice made all the difference in the world. He was a pioneer. He'd drawn up a detailed questionnaire for his clients, to know what every one of them wanted. He had a tiny office right behind the receptionist's desk and listened to everything everyone said: comments from very young women as I was and from more mature, better informed customers. In my article, besides all the well-deserved compliments I gave him, I mentioned that the décor was a bit gray and kitsch. Amazingly, he reacted; he played along-and renovated the institute! Today his environment is worthy of him.

"Jacques Courtin is a child at heart, enthusiastic. He's always been hands-on, and I like that. Others manage their companies-he lives his. He is sensitive, understands, and catches ideas on the fly. On top of it all, he's just a nice man-and so marvelous with his wife. Quite a character. I've never met anyone like him in all my years as a journalist."



Caroline Van de Velde, who worked at Elle magazine, remembers her first contact with Jacques Courtin as well: "I was still an intern at the magazine-around 1969 or 1970, on Rue Réaumur. A man in a suit shows up with a little jar. The beauty industry was just taking off and there were basically only two types of products: the very pharmaceutical kind of boring, and the very luxurious-kind of frivolous. He showed me his cream, told me about it, explained what it did. In ten minutes, I was convinced! I didn't have a lot of power but I decided to do an article on it. My luck was such that the day it was published I got to work late. When I walked in I was told, 'The ad director wants to see you.'-a gray-haired lady with eyes like a snake and orange lipstick all over her skinny mouth. Sort of

an inhospitable headmistress.

"She had a big blackboard in her office, with writing all over it. She said, 'Sit down. Do you know what advertising is?' I shook my head. 'In your opinion, who's our biggest advertiser?' I kept my mouth shut. 'And how much do you think he gives us per year?' Then she proceeds to announce an enormous figure-in mind-blowing millions of francs. 'Well, now that your adulatory article has come out on this unknown brand, he's pulling his ad! Do you hear me?'

"Did I hear her? All I was hoping at that second was that she wasn't going to ask me to give her all those millions from my pocket-that she'd 'merely' fire me. Then she asks in a completely different tone of voice, 'So what's this cream of yours like? I'd like to try it.' I could hardly believe my ears! On my way to fetch it from my office I asked, 'Uh...is that all?' She said, 'yes, that's all or, no: next time you have a brilliant idea like this, please talk to me first! That said, you're doing your job; you're informing your readers.'

"It turns out the big advertiser came back. And I wound up learning to be cautious and to continue taking risks!"

From the day Clarins was born, the press loved it. Caroline Van de Velde confirms, "We've always followed Jacques Courtin. He knows we love him. I have to say that his policy has always been very different from his competitors'. While the others are constantly launching new products, Clarins has long respected one course of action: no newness just to be new. Every launch is linked to a development. Of course, it was sometimes difficult to do ten articles in a row on the same..."

"I've always been aware of that problem," Jacques Courtin admits.

"But I've refused to give in to pressure. I know that a brand like Clarins is not easy for the press. When a journalist calls, it's usually to ask, 'What's new?' That's understandable-'what's new' is a reporter's job. But that's the way it is with us: we don't necessarily have new products all the time. Almost all our 'old' products are still on the market and are often bestsellers!"

"It's true that we don't necessarily have new products all the time," says Isabelle Fromager, now director of press relations. "But it's also true we have a different kind of relationship with journalists-specifically because they sense we're a different kind of company. Our products are improved, perfected, updated, but rarely is one discontinued. When the press comes to see us, they are happy to hear whatever we have to say. They trust us explicitly and believe in our products. They also know that we in turn are happy to hear what they have to say. The idea of listening to someone is very important to Monsieur Courtin."



Listening in fact has always been one of Jacques Courtin's top priorities. "More than that, it's a credo. Listening to others means putting yourself in their place especially listening attentively, discretely, without making a comment or trying to influence. When beauty industry journalists visit, we want to listen to them, as well. Their feedback is valuable to us. Practically all the products on the market come to their attention! I consider them true professionals in this field, and it's thanks to their input that some of our products in particular have been modified and improved."

"They often call us," Isabelle Fromager adds, "when they need to know more about the complexities of the skin, or what an ingredient does. If a lot of journalists feel responsible for having 'made' Clarins what it is, this is not only because they wrote extensively about us even when our ad budget was minuscule at first; it's also because they've had an ongoing dialogue with us: with Jacques Courtin and Dr. Olivier Courtin but also with our lab and production director Lionel de Benetti.



Indeed, when you ask Jacques Courtin how he thinks the company he created became a globally famous brand, he does not miss a beat in citing, in addition to the quality and effectiveness of his products, the support of the press. "The journalists tested our treatments and products. They liked them, told their readers about them. We owe them a big thank-you! Without them, the industry in general wouldn't be where it is today; they did a great service to beauty by giving it real importance. But I always say that an article must always be earned. Beauty page reporters know very well that what they write has an influence on women. For a woman, to be attractive is to be alive (including those who are convinced that to think is to be alive)¹⁶. You see, the fact that you're here at all means that your mother seduced a man. Being beautiful and being loved is the goal of every woman-whether it is admitted and acknowledged or not. Journalists have helped women become what they are today: beautiful, comfortable with themselves, confident and desirable. If you ask someone outside our profession what comes to mind when they hear Clarins, you'll always get an answer along the lines of: 16 The French philosopher René Descartes famously said, *Je pense donc je suis*." "I think therefore I am."

'Clarins is highly professional.' When journalists write about a beauty product they have to take responsibility for their recommendation-it's an important recommendation, a useful one, because beauty is not trivial. So it's better to have a proven product, one that won't suddenly disappear from the shelves without warning."



Is this what explains this cohesion between Clarins and the press? "It isn't the only thing," Isabelle Fromager answers. "Clarins explains its products, demonstrates its methods, and offers hints and tips and advice. We feel part of our mission is education. The goal is not only to sell products but also to teach women how to make the most

of what they have. No product leaves our factories without lengthy instructions in the packaging, full of advice. We produce beauty manuals on a regular basis and give them away to our customers. Together, the manuals make up a veritable encyclopedia of modern beauty. Journalists like that; it's like we're helping them do their jobs-explaining, informing. In their eyes, we're pioneers many times over and they think so highly of our products: not a woman without an answer to her problems, not a disappointing product, products still available after all these years. Even today, our oils, which we create over 50 years ago, are among our biggest sellers.



Marie-Paule Laval, administrator of the Marie-Claire Group, agrees. "I'm not a journalist but I do understand one thing: a journalist has a role to play in a woman's life. After a woman's mother, journalists often teach her the ABCs of beauty. What they write matters. In stores, I often see women waving pages torn from magazines, saying 'I want that.'-without even knowing what the product's called. Journalists direct their readers' attention toward worthy products-they're aware of their responsibility.

"Clarins products are sure bets, bestsellers that span decades. They're classics. They're tested and retested and they come from pros."

Isabelle Fromager says, "A product stays on the market because it works. That's why our first products are still in our catalogue. And we can only hope for one thing: that each new one enjoys the same destiny as its predecessors. That is why we're always in the forefront and always innovating. With proven products conceived for long-term beauty, without any exaggerated promises.

13.

"An ad is neither puzzle nor riddle."

Clarins is often cited as the brand that invented editorial advertising, that is to say ads in the form of articles whose primary goal is to inform. "It was somewhere between 1970 and 1973," says Marie-Claire Group's MariePaule Laval. "I was selling ad space in Cosmopolitan. As far as the barons of the Group were concerned, Cosmo was the darling of Evelyne Prouvost, the daughter of the legendary press mogul. That's what lit a fire under me to sell as many ad pages as possible and to make the magazine pay for itself. I knew about Clarins oils, which journalists had already discovered. I called Jacques Courtin and he agreed to a meeting. I liked him right away: he was intense, direct and easy-going.

"But our first meeting didn't go all that smoothly. As soon as I arrived at Rue Tronchet he said, 'I don't think your magazine's the right one for my ads.' At the time, his advertising was very informative, with several products per page explained in great detail; they called these 'shopping boxes.'

"I shot back, 'You have the right to say so but let me try to prove you wrong.' So he went on to tell me the story of his products, about their interesting history and solid groundings. He spoke with great passion; he really had something to say. After we had chatted for a while, we came up with was the idea of editorial advertising. He said, 'I'd like to give it a try.'"



Cosmopolitan beauty journalist Rosine Vidart is sent to Jacques Courtin to "give it a try," leaving her mark on cosmetics history with her unforgettable "Clarins, the antiblues institute."

"Rosine Vidart knew how to speak to women," Jacques Courtin remembers. "She had just the right words for describing and explaining, and when she was convinced, it was easy for her to convince others. She'd noticed the nice, friendly, warm atmosphere at Rue Tronchet. This surprised her, since institutes at the time tended to be a bit dreary and stuffy. And of course she saw the results of my treatments."



"You have to admit cellulite is depressing," says MariePaule Laval. Jacques renamed it capiton, which was already less discouraging. Not only did his institute have a great way of greeting you, of putting you at ease, of being lighthearted and professional at the same time, but on top of everything else they got results! And Jacques Courtin's love for the human body, and his amazing knowledge about it, immediately came through in Rosine's article. That started it all the phones began ringing off the hook.

"He's very fair-minded, so he called me. 'I guess you were right. Before going farther, I want to make sure it wasn't beginner's luck-I want to see if it really works. Let's do another test.' Four years later we were still going strong."



Cosmopolitan's first editorial advertisement appears. Other brands will follow but Clarins has started the trend: a simple black-and-white page among the luxurious double-page ads of its competitors.

Yet, Clarins makes the difference.

"Four years of monthly 'get-togethers' with our readers around the editorial ad," Marie-Paule Laval continues. "When Jacques said something I listened but what's wonderful is that the opposite was true too.

"The investment paid for itself. Several different reporters were involved, always with the same great success. Everything came from Jacques-he has his logic, his methods, and nothing can distract him. Jacques's genius is in his resilience. He's one of a kind in cosmetics history."

With tender, amused irony, Jacques Courtin also remembers the meetings with Marie-Paule. "She knew exactly what kind of picture I wanted: a warm-looking model with an open face, natural smile and eyes that speak to you. Once she showed up with several possibilities. None of them was smiley enough or natural enough: 'Clarins' enough, in other words. When I said so she answered, 'Wait, Jacques, let me explain.' I interrupted, 'Tell me who's going to be standing behind each reader explaining to her what you want to explain to me? The reader is alone there with her magazine; if you have to explain something to her it means the model isn't conveying it her herself. So, no.'

"She tried a few more arguments. Then she gathered up her papers and said, emphatically, 'Jacques, you're right. Plus, I knew exactly what you were going to say! The editors gave me the photos for you but I told them myself they weren't right at all.'

"I asked her, 'And you showed them to me anyway?'

"She smiled and said, 'These are the only ones they had..... And, you never know.'"

"An ad is neither a puzzle nor a riddle," says Jacques Courtin, who

knows exactly what he wants in an ad. "It should simply say what it has to say. Making an ad, which is easy to read, including in terms of the typeface we use, is a sign of the respect we owe to women. All capital letters. for instance, are hard on the eyes even in an ad's headline. and certainly in the entire body of text. Women buy magazines for the articles, not the ads. We barge in there like invaders with our adverts. That's why we have to be clear, direct, visible, and talk to women right away about what interests them: themselves.

"I was working on something once that required legal advice-someone had yet again copied one of my products. I shopped around for a lawyer but didn't really find what I was looking for. Then a friend gave me the name of a very well known attorney who handled just this kind of problem. I was moved by the very idea of meeting him! When I did, it took no more than ten minutes for me to understand everything having to do with my case. With the others, it had all been so complicated there never seemed to be a solution; with him, everything suddenly became obvious, crystal-clear and indisputable. I've found this with doctors too. The more experienced they are, the less they feel the need to weigh themselves down with complex vocabulary. It's the novices-or the ones who aren't totally sure of themselves who use the incomprehensible words. This lawyer knew what he was talking about and he found the words to go with it. If you put yourself in your client's shoes, your future takes care of itself!



Jacques Courtin's credo of "putting other's place" has worked for him all his life (well before seeing it in action with his lawyer!).

"I do the same thing with my clients. I put myself in their place. You have a woman who knows the dangers of overexposure to sun, but she wants a great tan. Why complicate things? My ad tells her she can be 'more tanned and less exposed.' That's all. It's short and it's true. As for the rest of the text, it lists our 'pluses' after all, we came up with the expression 'the Clarins plus.' And that's the only thing

the reader's interested in. I'm always on the lookout for the simplest words. I want to be clear and I want to be understood by everyone. That seems to be a rather obvious principle, but look at the ads you see most of the time..."

"But the simplest word is not always the easiest to come up with," Jacques Courtin notes. "Your language also has to evoke imagery that speaks to everyone. A great example-which has nothing to do with beauty is from the Gault-Millau Guide, where Christian Millau wrote about a restaurant where you could have a terrific steak with French fries 'that are still alive.' What better way to describe those fries and what better way to make you want some! The words had such an effect on me that, some time later, I kicked myself for having lost the address I'd written down. So I called and was put through to Christian Millau himself. I congratulated him on his text and he asked what field I was in. We hit it off and became friends. One day we were talking about our love of cooking and I brought up one of my pet subjects, dietetic gastronomy: how to prepare great, very sophisticated dishes while still making sure you're eating healthily. In fact, later on, Michel Guérard proved my point perfectly at his Eugénie-les-Bains weightloss spa by serving me eggs-soft-boiled to perfection mixed not with the usual bits of bread but tender little asparagus. What a treat!

"The term dietetic gastronomy immediately got Christian Millau's attention he really liked it and invited me several times to talk about it on his radio show. We called the feature 'Live Letters,' a play on 'Love Letters.

While the men in their lives were watching Sunday soccer, women listened to our broadcast: there were so many of them, and they had so many questions to ask me, that they jammed the switchboard!"

The last, but not least, consideration for an ad is the model. "Choosing a model is a sensitive issue, in all meanings of the term. We have many body care products, which calls for nudity. Nudity should be beautiful, not disturbing. You need natural, healthy, well-balanced, vibrant young women. You see four or five candidates, all very beautiful, and a single detail sometimes imperceptible makes the difference. The others leave and that's that; they're disappointed. I put myself in their place. The model chosen is going to earn a lot of money, especially with rights-of-use, and the rest had to show up and get undressed-wait for a decision, then...leave. I usually gave them a product. That certainly didn't replace a job but it was to show my respect for them, to let them know I was aware of the effort they'd made in coming to see us. And to avoid problems, to put them at ease, I almost always had Geneviève with me, from our ad department."



Geneviève Gallas's entire career has been spent at Clarins, where she began at the end of the 1970s and is now director of communication. "When I started with Clarins it was 'the little brand on the way up'-a brand selling only treatments, which was extremely rare at the time. I'd seen their ads, called 'shopping boxes' very explanatory, a little like mini beauty-lessons. Monsieur Courtin's office was in the middle of the institute. The businessmen who came to see him were in the same waiting room as the clients."



"Whenever we had something to announce a new treatment, a new product we wrote to our clients," Geneviève Gallas says. "What is now known as a mailing campaign. In general, we got six answers out of every ten letters sent -a rate of return that many direct-marketing companies would envy! Without realizing it and certainly without bragging about it, Monsieur Courtin really invented it all: direct marketing, the customer relations department,

editorial-ads as the main form of publicity. He was always listening and read every piece of mail. Where others would have delegated, he checked for himself. If a client complained, he read the answer we sent. This sense of responsibility was in his blood. He felt responsible for all his products.

"When they were sold outside his walls he felt really frustrated; he found it hard let go. He stayed connected anyway, through the client feedback cards included with each product. He was forever looking to open up dialogue, exchange views, be criticized-so he could progress."



His perfectionism has led him to rewrite his products descriptions again and again. "He was never easy on himself. Up to the very last minute he was capable of questioning everything and of even starting from scratch," Geneviève Gallas continues. "I've seen people pull their hair out: 'But you signed off on this yesterday!' And he would calmly reply, 'Yes, but yesterday I didn't know what I know today' and then go back to square one. He always pushed his sense of responsibility to the extreme: the ads, for instance, were also a way of giving out free advice. As a professional he felt he always had to give more, explain better, list the dos and don'ts. His sun products are a perfect example of the role of 'educator' he saw for himself: he was one of the first to tell women about the dangers of too much sun, and to offer them a way to tan without it."



According to Jacques Courtin, communication does not start with an ad. It starts with the product itself. The product is its own ambassador. It has to say what it is and what it does. "He attached a huge amount of importance to product instructions," Geneviève Gallas remembers. "He was the one who started printing them right onto the packaging-always in the same three paragraphs, so his

clients would know where to look: action, characteristics, and composition. You couldn't help learning from him. He had so much experience and yet he was never jaded. There was always this incredible freshness about him, as if everything was always new.

"It was 'anti-marketing,' 'anti-strategy'-because Monsieur Courtin has followed only one strategy all along: his clients' wishes. Wishes they have shared with him in conversations, and especially via their feedback cards, where they're sincere, they're themselves, and are not influenced by anyone else's answers. They give their opinions and make their suggestions with no outside pressure. For Monsieur Courtin marketing is a living thing, a partnership with his clients. The results speak for themselves: practically all the products he's created are in the catalogue to this day."



As Geneviève Gallas's recounts the memories, her emotions are unmistakably vivid. "Jacques Courtin is very attentive and very human. He never attacks anyone. He can say, 'I would have expected better from you' but he will never say 'You are no good.' At Clarins, you are loved, respected, and listened to. Today the brand lives according to the same values it was built on values we've never needed to state out loud because they go without saying. Everyone who has worked at Clarins is a natural representative of those values, effortlessly, freely. I remember a trip to our Japanese headquarters: In the entrance, there was a huge photo of Jacques Courtin and one day a female employee threw him a kiss when she walked in. He's always wanted his brand and the people who work for it to be loved, loved even before its quality convinces you that it's great. That's been his mission, his calling. You can't understand what Clarins is today if you don't know that aspect of Monsieur Courtin. He's truly unique. You can't really explain Clarins; you have to live it. It's not a brand you learn about, it's one that winds up permeating you. Sometimes all you need say is, 'That is Clarins' or 'That is not Clarins.' It's an institution. You live it. You know it. One day, you become it-Clarins becomes second nature to you. And you know what? His sons feel it too they feel the

same love."



The team spirit was born along with the brand. "I remember Rue Tronchet. Everyone could speak openly. The atmosphere was joyous. We believed in what we were doing. We felt a certain pride to be working for a brand we knew was special, founded by a special man. I remember Simone, our cook. She'd go to the market then make us family-style meals. Monsieur Courtin ate with us. We were happy. When we moved to Neuilly, we had a real cafeteria, and at the beginning when he came down to lunch, everyone went suddenly quiet: the new people didn't know him and felt daunted. That's why Monsieur Courtin started having lunch in his office-not to close himself off in his ivory tower, like some people thought, but because he saw that when he showed up everyone stopped talking. He wanted his employees to have a place of their own, where they could speak freely. He felt he was bothering them. Out of respect, he preferred to leave them alone."



Speaking of the cafeteria, here's a final detail: "Every day for years Monsieur Courtin asked to see the menu, to make sure we had balanced meals. Sometimes he'd scold the chef-if he served too much starch, for instance, or too few vegetables. As far as Monsieur Courtin was concerned, it was out of the question for us to eat badly. Meals had to be a celebration, a form of relaxation, a pleasant mid-day pause. He saw the company restaurant as a place of informal get-togethers for members of the same 'family,' even if they didn't all know each other."

14.

"Clarins is a good-luck charm."

1976. The perfumers' convention. Everyone is dashing to the closing event. Representatives of the most prestigious brands are there and most of France's perfumers have come to meet them. As the perfumeries prepare for a metamorphosis, questions abound.

But for now, it's party time—a gala dinner with evening gowns and tuxedos. In the crowd, a man looks around and finally spots Jacques Courtin.

Good sign: they've been placed at the same table. Giving destiny a little nudge, the man rearranges the name cards, and takes his seat next to a person he greatly admires.

"Clarins was the cosmetics industry's last adventure," Serge Rosinoer says with much pleasure. "I used to work for a huge American multinational where I made a very good living. Make-up, perfume...everything was humming along. But with Clarins, I felt there were things to do. And we did them."

That night at dinner, Jacques Courtin and Serge Rosinoer strike up their first conversation, which was to last 25 years.

"Twenty-five years of work, success and happiness," Jacques Courtin adds movingly.



Their second meeting takes place in Jacques Courtin's office. Just as it is ending, the arrival of a well-known advertising executive is announced. Jacques Courtin invites Serge Rosinoer to stay.

"The ad exec had an idea for me," Jacques Courtin says. "To distinguish us from everything else out there from all the beautiful girls in bikinis on sun-product ads she was suggesting a swimmer, in bathing cap and diving goggles, doing the crawl. It was a photo taken from the side, so you basically saw only her mouth taking in air. Then he said, 'I understand Clarins. You want to be different. This photo is intriguing. It also shows that your products protect-just like the water that's surrounding the swimmer.' I complimented his work and said, 'I understand where you're going with this. I need to mull it over for a little while. I'll think about it and get back to you.' When I returned from seeing the man to the door, Serge Rosinoer asked, 'You going with this ad?' I broke out in a laugh and said, 'Of course not. But he must have worked hard to come up with that monstrosity. I respect his effort-I couldn't just ditch him like that.' Serge was obviously relieved and said, 'Whew! If you had said yes, I was getting out of here as far away as possible!'"



One of the company's faithful employees, Edmée Boisquillon was hired into the accounting department at Serge Rosinoer's urging two weeks after he joined the Clarins team. "I wasn't here at the very, very beginning, but Clarins back then didn't look anything like what it is today. We were still on Rue Tronchet. Serge Rosinoer worked on a little pull-down board attached to Monsieur Courtin's desk-there wasn't even room to give him a desk of his own! That lasted for weeks. But no one seemed to mind; what mattered was working together and making progress.



In 1971, Clarins has a turnover of ten million francs¹⁸ and the brand is sold in nearly 15 countries by 1975. However, in 1976 it still has SME status.

"When I arrived," Edmée Boisquillon continues, "our computer system wasn't really up to par. You wouldn't believe what my first bank-reconciliation looked like. We measured the calculator tape it was 24 yards long! Monsieur Courtin was great with words but money didn't interest him to any great extent. He never exploited his company. Never. When he had to take a taxi to a meeting, he paid from his own pocket. Same thing when he gave flowers to a beautician for her birthday. Scrupulously honest he says it's to set an example, but he's that way naturally. Just a wonderful man! He was always inventing something. At the beginning I didn't really know him, didn't know what he was capable of coming up with. In one of the rooms once, I saw what looked like a rolling pin with little rubber patterns on it, as if it were for making designs in dough or something. I thought it belonged to Simone, our cook, so I took it to her. She said, 'No, that's for massages.' It was the Masvelt"



Under Serge Rosinoer's leadership, Clarins is gradually being organized and structured. "We created a new company every six months; we never stopped growing," Edmée Boisquillon says with enthusiasm. "One day Serge said, 'We have to find a site.' There was a factory for sale in Pontoise. We went to visit it and Serge suggested we take it, even though it was too big—we could always rent out part of it, he said. Today not only is it too small for us, but that's after we added extensions and dug a tunnel under the road so we could use a whole field on the other side. And then came Amiens."



Success has arrived, and yet Jacques Courtin keeps a low profile vis-

à-vis the competition. What matters to him are the clients not the fanfare.

"He was for discretion and against ostentation. He didn't want us to show off. No color ads-just black and white. He wanted to do things as he always had. Women were reading their magazines, discovering the simple, honest words he used for describing his products. It was all so professional-it made them want to try Clarins. On the other hand, he never limited the production budget. It was about modest packaging but rich formulas."

And life goes on. Every Monday the accounting personnel go from Corneilles to Rue Tronchet for update meetings.

"But at 7pm sharp, Monsieur Courtin's alarm would go off. It was time to go home. Madame Courtin was waiting for him; in his eyes, family was sacred."

"Truth be told," Jacques Courtin confirms, "I don't think I had more than two or three business dinners in my entire career. You have to admit they're not indispensable."



Serge Rosinoer takes to Clarins like a fish to water. "When I worked for the other company I used to look at Clarins and say, 'How great to have the courage and knowledge to make treatment products and not just perfume or make-up.' Treatment isn't subject to fashion whims-if it's well conceived it can span years, centuries. That's where the industry's potential lies. And the facts have borne that out."

Focusing on treatment has been Jacques Courtin's calling.

"Jacques Courtin is a visionary. He's always been a marketing specialist without even knowing it. No conniving, no premeditation, just the right ideas at the right time." Beauty had been synonymous with luxury. Thanks to Clarins, it became synonymous with

effectiveness as well. Clarins is scientific; its high-performance natural ingredients form the basis of its products' success. Applying medical methodology to beauty care, it begs the questions, 'What is your problem? How can we treat it?' As women's interest in their appearance progressively grew, the Clarins approach brought them hope and promise.

"We thought that might be the case," Serge Rosinoer says, "but we had no idea how far it would go. Clarins's market share went beyond anything we could have imagined. The ideas Jacques Courtin put into place seemed simple, but no one else had them. They were simple but not simplistic."



"And on top of it all, he has a sense of humor," Edmée Boisquillon says. "He could laugh at everything. I was the keeper of the keys—all in one key case. Any time anyone needed one, they came to bother me. One day I was in the middle of doing the payroll, and I really had to concentrate. Someone comes in for a key. I was hugely irritated, got up and barged into Monsieur Courtin's office, which he always left open. I put the keys on his desk, told him I was finished being pestered, that I no longer wanted to be the 'official gate-keeper', ' turned around and stormed out. A few minutes later he shows up in my office with a piece of paper that said: You disturbed me for a key. I don't want to be president any more. Well, that did it: he put the smile back on my face. Even better than that we actually had a good laugh!"



Serge Rosinoer and Christian Courtin direct the overseas expansion, creating subsidiaries, which transform Clarins from a French company selling abroad into an international entity. Roland Broussard, administrative and finance director, explains, "That period was characterized by growth. Thirty percent per year. It

went so fast that we always seemed to be running after something. Clarins was exploding. When I got there in 1977, the company had 300 employees and a turnover of 40 million francs. The brand was present in over 100 countries, thanks to Christian Courtin, but had no subsidiaries. To give you an idea of its growth potential, less than ten years later the company went public. And all this with management that has never ceased to amaze me.

"The first time I met Jacques Courtin he told me, 'Your résumé says you're an important, responsible executive. If you want, come and see what Clarins is like for a week before making up your mind.' That sounded new to me-it sounded crazy! but then I said, 'Why not?' I was working in mass retailing and I took a week's vacation so that I could come to Clarins. I never left. Imagine every Sunday night being able to say, 'Great-tomorrow's Monday!' Now that's luxury."

"Work is its own reward," Jacques Courtin says. "And true success lies in creating something. We all want to make something of our lives. School isn't everything; learning what exists is good, but making something that never was before, well... Occasionally I tell myself that being forced to leave my studies was actually a blessing in disguise. If I had learned everything that interested me when I was young, I might not have dedicated myself to a life of constant learning later on. I probably would've been content to know what I knew, and that would've been that."



"In 1980 we were already the biggest beauty treatment brand in France," Christian Courtin says. "This was an excellent calling card for the United States. Traditionally, French firms dominated the treatment market, the Americans make-up and perfume was divided equally between the two. In treatment, therefore, we had all the legitimacy we needed. Pierre Rogers was named head of the U.S. subsidiary, which started with 25 points of sale. Nineteen eighty-one was also the year François Mitterrand became president. The exchange rate was in our favor."

Yet, everyone at Clarins was holding their breath.

"The first subsidiary was a first revolution for us. Persuaded by Serge Rosinoer, we gave up the system of distribution agents, which meant we had a vision, a hope, the conviction that Clarins was on its way to the big time. In the United States, the market was 50 percent perfume, 33 percent make-up and only 17 percent treatment. For a brand that, at the time, did only treatments, this was a risky bet. Plus, we were going from being a leader in France to being a challenger. To top it all off, we knew that different eating habits and lifestyles over there meant skin characteristics might not be what we were used to dealing with."

Through it all, no one got discouraged.

"In the U.S.A., the competing brands made heavy use of gift-with-purchase, and still do. We didn't want to be involved in this system. First, because giving a gift to sell a product didn't go along with our philosophy, but especially because a GWP is given indiscriminately to every woman, regardless of her skin type, her expectations..."



Different market, different rules. What do you do do you change?
No, you study, compare and decide.

"Well, we got around the problem by highlighting our strengths: listening, advice and service. We trained sales assistants. We established beauty 'prescriptions' and developed try-before-you-buy-samples that, in accordance with our philosophy, allowed for custom-made advice. Our sample distribution strategy-not based on randomness but targeted to specific recipients according to the prescriptions we'd worked up for them-involved specially created packages of all the products needed for a complete 10-day treatment program, skin-type by skin-type.

"In other words, we remained true to ourselves; the emphasis was

on contact and communication. We announced our arrival at Saks with a real letter, bearing a real stamp, sent to every one of our customers. I mean a stamp that you lick as opposed to one that comes out of a machine; this was quality as opposed to quantity. We invited them to visit us and had an enormous response rate nearly 30 percent. Growth was slow but steady: by the first year, we'd made our first million dollars. In 2003 we were at 200 million dollars."

In the meantime, European and Asian subsidiaries proliferate, as does the company's success. Its products attract more and more loyal users, from more and more countries and cultures-all united by the same set of values, Jacques Courtin's values, Clarins's values: respecting the client, and, always listening, listening, listening.

15.

"Doing good by giving beauty."

"I'd just gotten back from a three-week trip to widen Clarins's horizons: Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore. I went right to Rue Tronchet to meet with Jacques Courtin. I started talking about turnover and market share but he cut me off cold. 'The women there-what do they want? What do they like? What do they need? What do they expect from us and what can't they find elsewhere that we can give them?' That really left an impression on me. His priority wasn't knowing how much money we were making in those countries, it was the women-understanding their needs to be able to satisfy them."

Peter Haenlein has never forgotten that exchange with Jacques Courtin; it influenced his entire career at Clarins. "I'm German but I've worked mostly outside my country. I arrived at Clarins in 1978- before that, I'd worked with Serge Rosinoer in a big American firm. I missed Serge, and then one day I got a call from him.

"He said, 'I'm with Clarins.'

"I said, 'With who?'

"He said, 'I'm looking for someone in marketing, for export.'

"We had lunch at the Crocodile, on Rue Vignon near the office. There he informs me I'd be working with the boss's son. Work with a boss's son? I'll tell you, I had to think about that one. But it turns

out we've never had the slightest problem-quite the opposite."

Peter Haenlein moves into Christian Courtin's office. "We shared that office for years-us and his dog, Opium."

He, too, remembers the cafeteria. "A little room with a Formica table and chairs around it. Simone, the cook. What a great atmosphere. Really nice. We talked about products being launched. It was friendly, family-like. Sometimes Monsieur Courtin took us to a restaurant near the Saint-Lazare train station, Le Routier. Very good food. After lunch, we'd segue into a product meeting-things progressed that way. We were working all the time, but we didn't realize it. It was enjoyable."

Serge Rosinoer and Christian Courtin provide the impetus. They consider being successful in France essential to build solid, long-term groundings and thus break the U.S.A. from a position of strength.

"We went abroad armed with our department-store statistics, Peter Haenlein explains. That made an impression. A market share hovering around 30 percent gave us prestige.

"In the United Kingdom we reinvented the wheel. We had an agent who worked a lot with institutes but he didn't really understand Clarins. He basically sold wherever he could; I even saw a Relax Body Treatment Oil in a sex shop, believe it or not! We had a counter or two in department stores thanks to a French woman who liked the brand. We said what we really needed was a subsidiary so we went over in October to check things out. Serge said, "OK, but it has to be up and running by January 1."



Clarins U.K. opens January 1: no warehouse, no headquarters, no management team and no offices.

"I called the company putting us up temporarily-a manufacturer of point-of-purchase advertising. I wanted to know whether he had any ideas. He had an empty building and said he'd see what he could do. We moved in, asked Paris for a computer and we were off!"

Without a branch president...

"We met Robin Vincent an excellent man, who knew the market perfectly. However, in the UK, all of our business was carried out in institutes, with a special kind of customer he wasn't very familiar with. He said, 'I promise that a year from now, I'll know everything there is to know about them.' He started in 1982 as president of the UK subsidiary and he's still going strong today, still the absolute expert in the institute market. Our leading country and our strongest market penetration is the United Kingdom."

"Robin Vincent hadn't heard of Clarins," Jacques Courtin says, "but that was probably an advantage. He learned about everything at the same time: the market and our philosophy. He didn't come to us with preconceived notions or prejudices; he could start from scratch. For him everything was new so he looked at it all from a fresh point of view. He's the one who understood the Clarins philosophy the best, and put it to work the best especially the institute treatments."



"My first objective was to put institutes in department stores, Robin Vincent says. "I went to see the perfume buyer at one of them and said, 'You know, we also have products for the body. What do you think about arranging for private consultations?' She liked the idea

and agreed right away. Two days a week, she lent us her office and we were immediately booked up. After a while, we moved into an office of our own, and the consultation became a mini-treatment session. That's how it all started-like a cog in a wheel. And you know what that cog was made of? Loyalty!

"At Selfridges we created the first Skincare Center, a counter with sales assistants-beauticians dressed in white. The whole Paris team came over for the inauguration. Today we have 60 centers in department stores and more than 1,000 sales assistants across the country. Clarins is the definite leader, with over 50% of the treatment market. We arrived just at the time the English market for treatment products was exploding. But Clarins is probably not a stranger to that kind of thing. The timing was good. And the Clarins philosophy-fully adapted is still an example to be followed."

Peter Haenlein is once again on the front line for Germany but things are a bit different. "Serge told me, 'You're going to handle Germany-tell our agent a German is going to take care of them.' I contacted our agent. He gave me the lay of the land, insisting on the fact that all our competitors were well entrenched. Competition was tough and the question he asked me was, 'Why would a retailer choose us?' In other words, over the brands they usually sell. When Serge and I were on our way to Germany, I told him what our agent had asked. Serge didn't get flustered, just pulled out a piece of paper, and said, 'It's simple-let's make a list. This became the Warum Clarins?, a sort of brand philosophy improvised on an airplane tray-table.

"But it must be said that Jacques Courtin had essentially done our work for us. Everything was there-it just had to be formalized."

That philosophy has been the basis of decades of success: treatment, listening, respect. Quality, tested products, with no expense spared in their making. New products only when justified, concentrated use of plants and a celebration of the natural and the authentic.

All of course communicated with continually honed language: "Monsieur Courtin can talk about his brand like no one else, says Brigitte Ducos, executive in the international division for nearly 20 years. "The different countries like the fact that there's someone behind the products, but most of all they like the richness of the words: the words Monsieur Courtin uses to describe what he's giving them. Clarins embodies formula after formula-but words count too. Very much so. Monsieur Courtin was the first to use product packaging to get his points across: actions, characteristics, composition. What with globalization, we've had to translate them into five languages, and trying to write as clearly and simply as possible in the others sometimes even helped us improve the French version!



Armed with the same strengths that led to its launch, Clarins conquers the world, adding a new line to its message along the way. Clarins is now a family company; it is large though not part of a big group and human despite the giant it is becoming.

The Germany market opens successfully but retailers are not initially very motivated. "We had a lot of problems because of exchange rates. That's why we wanted someone particularly strong as president there. At the time, executives often looked like they'd just gotten off a plane from Hollywood. That's not Clarins; we needed someone with their feet firmly planted on the ground. Elmar Steiger was our man-he had a perfect background: an enterprising person and a die-hard Clarins fan. After Germany, he went on to head Italy. He is now retired."



Clarins moves ahead, and grows. "The U.S.A. was the fiefdom of Serge Rosinoer and Christian Courtin. They trusted us with the rest. Eric and I divided up the world," Peter Haenlein jokes.

Eric Henry grew up in the industry: his father is the owner of major perfume shops. "That didn't matter," he says. "At Clarins everything was new, unexpected and unpredictable. It was as if I didn't know anything anymore. When I got back from my first trip to Japan for Clarins, I ran into Jacques Courtin. I was a bit awestruck and greeted him I didn't really know what to say. He put me at ease immediately and asked, 'Tell me in Japan, where does one see bodies?' The question caught me off guard. He explained: 'Where do Japanese women have the chance to show themselves off-in a bathing suit, naked-and under what circumstances?' I was flabbergasted, and ran to tell Peter-who broke out laughing. He wasn't surprised at all. 'For Monsieur Courtin,' he said, 'everything comes from the client and everything goes to the client. The priority is to study her.'"

"Back then," Jacques Courtin says, "I thought of Japanese woman as swaddled in layers of kimonos. I knew about bath houses, but no one ever told me about beaches."



When he runs into Peter Haenlein in Japan, Eric Henry has just finished school and military service, which he did at the French Embassy in Tokyo. "I gave myself 18 months to learn everything I could about the Japanese cosmetics market. And then what? I had no idea until the day Peter Haenlein answered that question for me: he offered me a job at Clarins. My father admired Serge Rosinoer. I was on my way...

"Japan's lure for industrialists then was like China's today. As for the industry I work in, the rules of the game were simple: Japanese women used little or no perfume so treatment products had to carry the day. I'd had an offer to work for a major luxury-brand but I preferred Clarins. My friends thought I was crazy but I knew this

brand and knew I was making the right choice. Jacques Courtin sees the business through his own eyes he doesn't see the same things the rest of us do. I drank in everything he said. No one else, no other brand, had what he had."



As it internationalizes, Clarins has to learn to manage its image. It must radiate throughout the world while remaining true to the parent company. Its unique codes must be workable around the globe.

In 1982, Yvette James is recruited to manage marketing. "I came from a very glamorous, very 'make-up' American brand. We had a kind of unwritten dress code: stylish suit, polished nails... Serge Rosinoer contacted me and I'll never forget my first visit to Clarins. This was still Rue Tronchet-the Neuilly site wasn't ready yet. While I was waiting for Monsieur Courtin, I looked around at the décor, the people rushing here and there. I have to say I was pretty surprised. I saw white, I saw gray and I saw rigorous professionals. Next to the American luxury I was used to, Monsieur Courtin's minuscule office threw me for a loop. So did his first words: 'What do you think of beauty marketing?' I didn't know how to answer. He stepped right in again. 'As opposed to other brands, there's only one thing that matters at Clarins: women and beauty taken seriously.' I immediately knew this was going to be a beautiful adventure for me!"

At the beginning, Yvette James is constantly sidetracked by internal operations. "The sales managers were very nice women, but there was no formal budget, no sales forecasts, and no job descriptions. Everything was done on paper-in pencil so they could erase and update as they went along. It was certainly a change of pace from computers. I got there in winter, just when a self-tanning launch was going on. Since I hate flying blind, I rolled up my sleeves and tried to apply the methods I had always used. The first thing I did was draw up a marketing plan, with sales objectives. By February, we'd already sold ten times more self-tanners than in my forecast!

Two months after I got there, my desk was overflowing with files. I had dived in head first with dedication I'd never thought myself capable of, and incredible joy."

The brand is already doing extremely well by the time Yvette James comes to Clarins, but she had not yet adopted the rigor of her American elders.

"Monsieur Courtin was very attached to his brand's colors, white and red. That is understandable. But apart for the products, everyone was doing more or less what they wanted-with brochures, shop windows..."

Clarins did not have the same rules as American companies, but it had others: "I learned that you should never force quantity on perfume shops. Making them take a bigger order meant forcing them to hard sell. That wasn't the Clarins way. Again, what mattered were the clients. At Clarins, we learned the art of saying no: no to traditional sales techniques.

Clarins moves ahead. And changes address!

"35 Rue Tronchet was no longer a viable option," Christian Courtin remembers. "Three of us in the same office (even with one person at least always away on business), organizing ourselves into shifts for receiving clients and suppliers-it was becoming too complicated. We had overflowed into number 23 and then 29. The Rue Tronchet had become the Rue Clarins, but that still was not enough. We had to find something else, something bigger. That's when I heard about the building in Neuilly.

Serge Rosinoer also considers the move inevitable. When he visits 4

Rue Berteaux-Dumas in Neuilly he knows it is right for Clarins, even if he needs a lot of imagination to envision how it will look. "It was a garage and some time before that it had been a factory that made Canoe perfume by Dana-whose hour of glory had passed. There was a service elevator, which could take a van up to the fifth floor. We pulled off our idea of creating a large open central well so we could see and speak to each other from floor to floor, and we were very inventive in our way of using every available surface. But even that didn't do it-in 1994 we had to build floor number six."



"Clarins needed a headquarters worthy of our brand," Edmée Boisquillon says. "We had our eye on this building for a while and Christian Courtin made an offer but we weren't getting anywhere; there were plenty of others interested as well. But Serge Rosinoer kept at it."

A trip to Geneva later, endless negotiations, discussions complicated by the number of owners of different nationalities: by sheer will, the Clarins team prevails.

"We finally won," Edmée Boisquillon continues, "but when I saw it for the first time, before the renovations, I said, 'You call this a victory?' But as soon as we saw it all finished, we understood. It's really ideal for us. The financial department was the first to move in and the paint was hardly even dry! All the same, we felt bad for Monsieur Courtin-it was tough for him to leave Rue Tronchet, and his beloved clients there."

"My dialogue with women is my vital source of inspiration," Jacques Courtin adds. Ask someone, 'Is air important to you?' and they might shrug you off. But cut their oxygen supply and they're not going to be around for too long. You don't realize how important something is until it's taken away."



Jacques Courtin settles into his massive 5th-floor office in the luxurious building, just opposite Serge Rosinoer's equally large space. But he cannot live without an institute and contact with consumers.

Thus, the Neuilly beauty center ends up opening at almost the same point in time. "The institute didn't mean exactly the same thing to me any more," Jacques Courtin says. "What is does now is essentially let me stay in touch with our clients, keep on top of our products on a daily basis, ask our beauticians for feedback they received on the latest treatment I've developed and understand what new expectations are out there. That's also where I've been able to perfect my products and methods and train the Clarins beauticians: we of course have a school, and some of the trainers are beauticians who've been with us from the very beginning. They want to pass on their expertise. They're excited about transmitting the knowledge they acquired and the love of their profession-from years of experience at Clarins."



Nicole Kewe has been one of the school's pillars. "We've certainly had our share of students of so many nationalities, from so many countries. We've trained tens of thousands in 50 years. For the school, as with everything, Monsieur Courtin was endlessly improving his methods. I was a student at his very first school. Then we lost touch. When I applied for a job with him ten years later he did what he always does: asked me to show him what I knew. I started in and he stopped me immediately. 'What's this method that goes back to Methuselah?' I answered, 'It's yours. I was your student ten years ago and...' He interrupted: 'It was mine. At the time, I was ahead of the curve but now this is ancient history. I've evolved since then; I've learned an enormous amount from our clients. It looks like I'm going to have to bring you up to date.' He was always reaching for the next highest level."

So much so, that he puts a suggestion book at the disposal of his students. "He was ready to hear anything, as long as it would lead

to improvement," Nicole Kewe says. "The upshot is we've wound up hearing it all! I remember one class of foreign students. It was the end of the course and, as usual on the last day, Monsieur Courtin was there. He always wants to be present at the end to get feedback while it's still fresh-and to make the most of it. I asked the students 'the ritualistic question': 'How do you think this course could be improved?' Someone raised her hand and in a loud, accented voice said, 'Coffee breaks should be moved to the terrace.' I thought Monsieur Courtin was going to faint!

"But no matter what, he always wants to be with us when we say good-bye to the beauticians. We give them their diplomas and Monsieur Courtin says a couple words: he never fails to remind them of the essential role they play, of their importance to our clients and the value of their advice. He endlessly tells them, 'A woman's future happiness might depend on a single piece of advice.' He often reminds them that they're more important than they think, that the way a woman is received and treated can influence the rest of her day. If she leaves happy and feeling good about herself, she'll in turn be nicer to the people around her-her husband, children, colleagues. As far as Monsieur Courtin is concerned, that's a hugely essential part of a beautician's role: her ability to communicate, to bond with her clients in a special moment of intimacy and sharing. According to him, beauty lets us do good. He also says his work of creating products and methods, and our work of applying them as beauticians, consist of 'doing good by giving beauty.' Beauty care taken seriously can even be a type of therapy-we know that today."

"There's a funny story from one of our perfumers' conventions," Jacques Courtin says. "The atmosphere at the gala dinner was both elegant and relaxed. I was seated at the presidents' table, with the industry's eminent figures (Clarins wasn't yet the major player it has now become). We were in the middle of dessert-the orchestra was playing and people dancing-when an attractive young lady approached me from behind and, without my seeing her at first, respectfully put her arms around me. We exchanged several words in a very 'bonding' sort of way, she whirled in place to show me her pretty dress and she was off. My fellow presidents were watching this spectacle-a little bewildered, with their forks in the air-obviously amused by it, but not saying anything. A few minutes

later, the scene repeats itself with another very pretty, perfectly made up young lady. And others followed. The looks I was getting started to become jealous rather than curious. No one dared ask what was going on but it was obvious everyone was trying to guess!

"I understood their surprise and wanted to allay their curiosity so I explained, 'These ravishing young women are Clarins beauticians. Tonight they are experiencing what their clients often experience. Their designer dresses were lent to them. They came over to thank me. It's as simple as that.'

"Then someone said, 'You invite your beauticians to this kind of event?'

"This time I was the one who was surprised. I said, 'Of course! Clarins's beauticians are very important. Look at everything they bring to our clients. They play an essential role. I think it's completely normal that they, too, should have the opportunity-and the pleasure of feeling beautiful by coming to an evening like this. Clarins wants to make women happy through beauty. Our clients' happiness passes through these young women's hands. Why should I not do everything possible to make them happy too? They deserve to be here more than anyone else is. Whenever I can, I ask them questions and listen to them. They understand Clarins thoroughly. You just saw proof of that. That's what Clarins is: shared happiness."

16.

"Would I like to hear what I'm about to tell this person?"

Clarins is growing, but Jacques Courtin remains the same. Although the government has not passed its profit sharing law yet, his thinking and innovative actions are already moving in this direction.

"To be honest," he says, "everything became clear to me after a conversation with Serge Dassault. I agree with him when he says that, if it's not your own company, you can make mistakes without paying the price. It's different when you own the business or have a stake in it-then you always do your best, and better. Then you're in a situation where everyone wins. Serge Dassault's experience made me realize me that since all our employees contribute to Clarins's success, they also should enjoy the fruits of that success. Our success should shine on them as well. I decided to give them a stake in the company. At the time this was seen as a genuine, justifiable reward, as 'profit sharing' in the fullest sense of the term; today it's considered just a hefty company benefit-people don't really make the connection any more. Maybe that's due to lack of communication."

The decision stirs Edmée Boisquillon's deepest admiration. "Do you realize?! Here is a man who sets up-as early as 1972-a profit-sharing system for all his employees when nobody is telling him he

has to do this. It was only later, in '77 and '79, that we took the steps to make it official with the unions first and then the government. Nevertheless, the system began at Clarins in the early '70s. Plus, he did it on a very fair basis from the beginning this was pure Jacques Courtin! Half of the share to be distributed was divided equally among the employees. The other half was paid in proportion to your salary. Everyone came out ahead. There were years when for the lowest earners that was as much as four months' extra pay."



"Clarins is a good-luck Charm. Our calling is to make women happy by helping to make them beautiful," Jacques Courtin says. "How can we ask all our employees to make others happy if they're not happy themselves? Since part of that happiness depends on me, I want to hold up my end of the bargain. That's the least I can do. If you do a good job, if you make great products, package them skillfully, treat our clients wonderfully, it's the most natural thing in the world to be able to enjoy the rewards that inevitably follow. As for how we divvied it up, I didn't want to accentuate the differences among salary levels. In other words, I didn't want the lowest-paid employees getting the short end of the stick; but I didn't want the high earners to feel penalized either. Allocating everything in proportion to salary isn't fair to low earners; dividing it all equally hurts the executives. So we came up with this formula-it's not perfect but it seemed And when I personally buy stock it's always in companies fairest. In any case, the unions immediately accepted it. that practice profit sharing."



Life at Clarins is punctuated not only by big gestures like this, but by small ones as well: "When the company began, we assigned each new employee a "mentor"-to ease the way into the job. Also, when someone started with us, perhaps they hadn't been working for

some time, so I was perfectly OK to give them an advance the first month, when they asked for it. After all, employees give you an advance each month their work! It's also important to remember that a paycheck is the link between work life and home life: what someone earns at their place of employment they spend on their family. That's why I liked to distribute paychecks to each employee personally, and, so everyone could feel totally part of the company, I always put a little note about Clarins in the envelope."

"And then there were lilies of the valley for May 1st, galettes des rois in January," adds Marie-Astrid Manguillet, one of Jacques Courtin's assistants. These might not be big things but they leave their mark; little things too make you feel good at work. And when he receives gifts from the magazines he usually shares them with us all."

Nathalie Bordier, longtime assistant to Jacques Courtin and now manager of the institutes, takes it one step further: "The end-of-year party is a tradition here. One year in the late '80s we 'warned' Monsieur Courtin we were all going to dance the Lambada right after the scheduled Brazilian dance troupe. Once we had told him, we didn't say anything more about it. The big evening arrives. The head dancer was very beautiful and quite spectacular; her costume was covered in feathers. We heard the first chords of the Lambada and saw her approaching Monsieur Courtin, who pretended to duck. We all laughed like school kids. Then to our surprise, she pulled him out onto the dance floor, where, suddenly, he takes her in his arms and starts doing a wild Lambada himself-with professional moves, and everything! We all looked at each other in shock! We couldn't get over it. At first, we laughed, and then we watched in admiration. The next day we had our explanation: to surprise and amaze us Monsieur Courtin had asked this woman to come to his office, in street clothes, ten times or so, to teach him how to dance like a pro. Private Lambada lessons for the pleasure of seeing our stunned faces the night of the party!"

Smiling, Jacques Courtin finishes the story: "That evening I realized what dancers and actors must feel like when they're applauded on stage. It's a unique experience-much more intense than I would have imagined."



Nevertheless, Clarins has of course had its share of labor crises-albeit rather mild ones, given the size of the company.

"In 1968 there were some problems," Jacques Courtin says, "like everywhere in France that year. Miet was a resolute union man and led the strike at the Argenteuil factory. We were negotiating when all of a sudden he pounded his fist on the table. I thought that was his way of ending the session but he looks me straight in the eyes and says, 'Listen, Monsieur Courtin, I can't talk to you.' I asked him why. He refused to answer. I insisted. He finally took me aside and admitted, reluctantly, 'How can we negotiate with you...you of all people-you love to work!'"



Jacques Courtin has always managed crises with good sense, serenity and humor. "We had a huge combustion fire," Nathalie Bordier says. "All the upper floors were ravaged. Soot everywhere-it had blown through the cracks into every room, every closet. Even the safe-deposit box had a load of soot inside. We were all waiting around, some of us in the entrance, some in the street. Jacques Courtin gave the order: 'You can't work in these conditions. We have to have it cleaned professionally. Go home. Don't worry-I've talked with Mademoiselle Boisquillon; you won't lose any pay. We'll need at least three days. Your department heads will call to tell you when to come back.'

"Two or three days afterwards, very early in the morning, Marie-Astrid and I went back in. We'd been given jumpsuits and masks because soot produces toxic gas when it comes in contact with oxygen. When we entered Monsieur Courtin's office to tidy it up both of us screamed: we'd seen a silhouette there was someone in there! We jumped back-who could this possibly be?-then cautiously went in again, and saw... Monsieur Courtin, who'd gotten there at dawn to start putting some order into things. So that he wouldn't

dirty his suit and shirt he'd gotten out of them and was wearing a T-shirt, with this huge Indian on it, that he must've found lying around in the box of old Christmas presents. The thing must have been ten times too big for him-what a sight!

We must have laughed hysterically for a good fifteen minutes. There he was, all on his own, peacefully sorting his belongings in this XXL T-shirt that was spilling down over his pants. He wasn't the least bit worried about the toxic gas."



"In any case," says Chantal Elbaz, "all my memories of Monsieur Courtin are peppered with laughter. He has a great sense of humor and has always known how to spread laughter around. He likes joking. At Rue Tronchet, he'd leave his jacket on the back of his chair to go to the cafeteria for Simone's lunch. One day while he was at lunch someone sewed his sleeves closed. When he came back and saw them he said, 'Gee. I don't know what to do now. If I can't get my hands through my sleeves I guess I won't be able to hand you your paychecks.' -and then broke out laughing. But I have to say we had great respect for him, and even if we joked with him from time to time he knew where he stood with us. Monsieur Courtin knows how to relate to his personnel-he has this great talent of being able to put himself in everyone's place. He just knows how to act in every circumstance."

Jacques Courtin does not miss an opportunity to quote one of his favorite mottos: "'Would I like to hear what I'm about to tell this person?' That's essential. If I tell someone something I wouldn't want to hear, then that something is bad. That proves I've chosen the wrong words. You have to know how to say what others feel like hearing. So that's what I sometimes ask people who work with me: 'Would you like to be the one hearing what you're saying?'" Sometimes nothing more is needed to help someone see they could maybe express themselves less awkwardly-and to make them want to try again, with different words.



Jacques Courtin believes that what could have been considered a handicap turned out to be an advantage. "You know, I'm dyslexic, but this problem has worked in my favor. Since I had trouble expressing myself, I put my energy into listening. The more I listened, the more I understood. When I had to make a speech I rehearsed my lines over and over, which allowed me to think long and hard about what I had to say.

My dyslexia had a big effect on my sensitivity-in the 'vulnerability' meaning of the term; it made me even more sensitive than I was by nature. When you're sensitive and if you understand that others might be too, you're ahead of the game; you know what to say to them. Or, rather, you know what not to say to them. Let me give you an example: you should never say, 'You're wrong!' but rather, 'I may be wrong, but that's not the way I see things.' You have to temper your reaction, tone it down-that's the best way to make sure the people you're speaking with will be open to listening to your arguments. If you start out saying, 'You're wrong, they put up a barrier. Nothing gets through. You can talk for hours, it won't matter.'" Jacques Courtin's advice has worked for him throughout his career and has been his generous gift to those around him.



"I was really a pure financial man," says Pascal Pollet, who came to Clarins in 1984. "Cost control, financial reporting... I liked what I did but it didn't require a lot of human contact. In 1996, I made the big leap: Clarins wanted to send me to Australia, where they had just signed a joint venture. It wouldn't be an easy assignment but it was too tempting to turn down. I was about to find out what the operational end of the business was, interact with the markets... and face the challenge of being the only headquarters representative among our partners there.

"A few days before I left, Monsieur Courtin wanted to see me. He

handed me a document and said, "These are summaries of some of the best books I've ever read. I've put down the major ideas. I'd like you to have this. It has been of great help in my career-for understanding the subtleties of human psychology, of human relations. I think these thoughts have contributed to the success of Clarins.'

"I was surprised and, needless to say, very touched by his affectionate gesture. I knew the job ahead of me was going to be tough, and any help especially direct from our president! was welcome. On the plane, I picked up his document, basically out of boredom-I thought I'd leaf through it for a while and pass the time that way. But once I got into I could not put it down. I read it in one sitting, and then reread it several times in a row. It was much more important than I'd originally thought-full of obvious points but ones we forget all too often. That's why I reread it all the time."



The ability to listen is surely one of the greatest virtues of a manager, one that Pascal Pollet learned to cultivate. "I think now I'm more open-minded, I pay more attention to others and I'm more considerate of those around me. I've especially learned to acknowledge my mistakes that's so important. Maybe that's a commonplace characteristic but it sure got us out of a mess when I was heading the Canadian subsidiary. One of our distributors had told us that for personal reasons he didn't want his name in our ads. A little while after that, an ad came out with his name on it. He wrote a polite but firm letter to our advertising department, which sent him an apology in return. Some months later, it happened again. At that point, he didn't just send a nice, simple note, he wrote an official letter threatening a lawsuit. It looked like we were in for it. For an entire week, we wondered what we were going to do. Then, thinking of Monsieur Courtin's advice, I decided to call the distributor myself. He was beside himself-with rage, going on about lawyers, broken contracts...

"Again with Monsieur Courtin's principles in mind, I said, 'You're

right. You're completely right.' he already seemed to be calming down-'We have no excuse. We made a mistake, a regrettable mistake. I'm ashamed, so very sorry. How can we make it up to you? What can I do personally?' And that's how we were able to solve the problem amicably. Of course, he was right and of course, we were wrong. But how many people refuse to admit their mistakes and, out of pride, opt for conflict instead?"

Pascal Pollet has since returned to Paris and a topmanagement position in Clarins.

"I recently ran into Monsieur Courtin. He said, 'It's funny, Pascal, you're not the same. You've changed.' Monsieur Courtin's right. And I think that's due in part to the advice he gave me in that document as I was leaving for Australia. Precious advice, not to be taken lightly; advice that made me what I am today."

17.

"No miracles. Just results."

Clarins grows and multiplies from holiday to holiday, lily of the valley to lily of the valley, and year to year...

The Pontoise site, purchased in the early 80s, is expanding endlessly. "We started with a rectangle," Roland Broussard says. "Very quickly it turned into an L. Then a T..."

At the same time, turnover rises steadily, reaching 250 million francs in 1983. "The better known we became, the more the banks wooed us," Roland Broussard says. "Back then I devoted all my Wednesday mornings to receiving them."



Growth is good, but needs to be managed.

"The second marché had just been created and its founder selected companies that could be listed there. We were at the head of the roll."

Clarins directors become more diligent in attending their meetings with stockbrokers. "Monsieur Courtin was starting to think about the future, about the idea of giving control of the business to his sons. And with all those subsidiaries and all those teams springing

up around the world, going public gave a safety net to the business and a certain status to the brand."

On December 3, 1984, Clarins enters the second marché. "Finally, the archetypical company for which this market was created!" the president of the brokers' association declares by way of welcome. Times are good. The stock is snapped up and its price soars. "From the very first annual general meeting, Monsieur Courtin was just tremendous!" says Roland Broussard. "He looked like he'd been doing that all his life, talking about the company on such a grand scale. He's someone who 'gets it' and right away with this ability to adapt that makes great leaders what they are."

Financial analyst Pankaj Chandarana came to Clarins in 1996 to work with Pierre Milet, Finance Director and one of the company's key players. Although an outside observer when Clarins listed on the stock exchange, the day had a profound impact on him. "I watched Clarins with great joy. I saw it go public and I can tell you it was done masterfully! I remember that in financial circles Clarins was held up as an example. With Christian Courtin, Serge Rosinoer and Pierre Milet in the driver's seat, it's used as a case study to this day."

Pierre Milet works in the background. With Clarins since 1984, he is an essential part of this turning point in the company's life.

"Clarins's IPO wasn't a gamble," he explains today. "All you had to do was look at the potential. Clarins has unquestionable strengths and the beauty industry was exploding. There was also good reason to believe the market would develop in the direction of treatment; treatment doesn't depend on the fashion of the moment, the margins are steady. Clarins had become an international name. Up

against brands playing the 'dream' card, the 'beauty-secret' angle, Clarins was steadfast in its position on professionalism and rigor. No magic and no alchemy here just reality, research and perseverance. 'What's your problem?' 'How can we treat it?' We're talking about applying pharmaceutical and medical methods to beauty treatment; after years of believing in dreams, of overblown promises, that's what women really want. When you add in the fact that women are more and more interested in their own beauty, and living longer, you almost can't lose. We were bound to succeed. At least that's what we thought but we had no idea of how far it would go. Even if you follow your reasoning to its logical end, even if you're sure you've analyzed every last detail, you can't think of everything. When Serge hired me, he asked me two questions: 'Are you curious? Are you lucky?' I must have been luckier than I thought."



"Jacques Courtin often uses a line he likes a lot," Pierre Milet says with a smile. "About his products: 'No miracles. Just results.' That shows what a visionary he is. He's the first one in the cosmetics field who dared to say it like it is, to talk about his products with good sense, with reason and without exaggeration. This line also wound up being the symbol-I'd say even the motto of the brand's presence on the stock exchange: no miracles. Just results. Excellent results, at that, which have never failed us."



Cécile d'Estais, a brilliant financial analyst who has followed Clarins from the beginning, says, "At Clarins, family culture is very strong. You pick up right away that the company is Jacques Courtin's baby. His third child maybe the daughter he never had. In my opinion, that's why he's so attached to it. That's also what makes Clarins such a sure thing in our eyes, the eyes of us financial analysts. They've been pioneers. They have done things without running after a big

commotion or a big scoop. Their whole strategy is based on their clients. They don't work by jolts or fits and starts but gently and in depth. That is precisely why we sometimes have to convince investors, who are mostly male, about them, because the company doesn't go out of its way to be noticed. It lets its history and its performance speak for itself."

Alain Ferri, president of the stockbrokers' trade association, also applauds Clarins's financial feat: "A 250 million-franc turnover in 1984, the year of its IPO, to a billion euros in 2004. In 20 years, the turnover multiplied by 38. That's unparalleled in France. The same goes for its profits. Sixty million euros today double the total '84 turnover. I'd say that's mighty colossal, wouldn't you? But that's not the most surprising thing. What's amazing is Jacques Courtin's attitude: he's the only company president I know who cares less about what he's making than about what he's doing. Deep down, he's not really interested in earnings. What matters to him is which of his products are being bought that's his only measure of value for what he does and who he is."

Clarins's IPO gave Alain Ferri the chance to find out just what kind of president Jacques Courtin was-and to marvel at him: "The second marché had just been born. My business contacted firms that might be candidates for listing; met the presidents, talked to the financial people.

Jacques Courtin seemed as if he couldn't care less. His teams had convinced him he had to do this if he wanted the company to grow but he wasn't really in love with the idea. He didn't need money. The day of the IPO I said to him, 'Today you own an asset worth this much.' He smiled and said, 'I was just offered double. And that didn't have the least effect on me either.' Indeed Clarins had become

very well known in financial circles, but it was no longer a private company; it was now open to scrutiny by the press and the pundits and the analysts."

"This change only motivated me more," Jacques Courtin says. "Clarins was suddenly under the spotlight. Now we were obligated to succeed; we were morally obligated. There was another aspect: this meant other people out there believed in Clarins too they'd invested money. They had trusted me with their money! For me, for us, this was encouragement, like a diploma. But one that compels you to do even better."

"Around this time a financial analyst counseled me: 'Never deceive us.' I answered, 'That isn't possible. It's against our philosophy. Scrupulousness comes before everything. That's one of our company's bedrock values in all it stands for and in all it does.'"



"Clarins's life is a long peaceful river," Alain Ferri says. "It flows smoothly and is developing well. That's rare in my profession and therefore all the more meaningful. I have no idea how to explain this success, but I have a few theories. First and foremost, Jacques Courtin himself. For me, he represents love for women. 'I want women to be beautiful and happy.' That's what he keeps saying through his products and his methods. Next, it's a good-sized family firm, which is close to its clients. Their main competitor is a steamroller-they, on the other hand, are a racing car. They are people who really listen to their consumers-I never saw that anywhere else to this extent. That's how they're able to come out with the right product at the right time."

18.

"No gadgets.

True innovations-proven and effective."

"Plants have always been with me as the basis of my products, at the center of my thoughts and concerns," Jacques Courtin says. "And yet, one morning I was struck by what must be the most obvious idea in the world, but which had somehow escaped me until then: there are fragrant plants used for making perfume; there are functional plants whose beneficial actions are harnessed for making treatment products, and medicines. Why couldn't we create products containing both types of plants-the perfume kind with pleasant aromas, and the treatment kind with constructive actions? A perfumed treatment product. Phytotherapy meets aromatherapy!"

The fruit of this idea, which struck Jacques Courtin at the end of the 1970s, would wait ten years before ripening, when, in 1987, it of course became the Eau Dynamisante.

"The first time I was told about this I was amused more than anything else, Lionel de Benetti remembers. "It was too simple for more than a passing thought, and so obvious. But then I started really thinking about it. He wanted a new kind of eau de toilette-a truly novel one. So that just by putting on perfume you were also moisturizing, toning and energizing. Something pleasantly fragrant but light, with real, proven treatment properties. The challenge of a

kind of 'panacea' wound up intriguing me. It was clearly unheard of. We worked on it for years. And we got it right."



Millions of bottles of Eau Dynamisante sell every year throughout the world, which is a great result. Once launched, it was very quickly imitated by hundreds of competitors, which is even better.

"The idea of creating a product just to create a product never moved me," Jacques Courtin says. "Anyone can make yet another face cream, like certain brands do all you have to do is draw on what's already out there. However, inventing a product in the true sense of the term is of great interest to me. I'll do everything I can to be able to give women and men 'therapeutic' eau de toilette that combines smelling great with feeling great! I'm against gadget products-they're forgotten almost as soon as they're made and take up shelf space without offering anything new or different. Eau Dynamisante really blazed a trail in the cosmetics field. It's a perfect symbol of what I've wanted to do with Clarins.



An eau de toilette so different that its description sounds like a promise, which can't be fulfilled.

"Sentir bon, se sentir bien. They were exactly the words we needed!" gushes Geneviève Gallas. "The slogan was immediately understood and appreciated, because it described the product and makes you want to have it at the same time. Monsieur Courtin taught me many things: the secret of a good handshake, the importance of your first contact with a visitor, how to sit up straight in a chair, answering the phone with a smile in your voice to put your caller at ease: all useful, every day things. But where he really soared above the rest was in his quest for the right word."



"I bet I could talk about all the Clarins products from the angle of how different they are," Jacques Courtin says. "Sometimes the difference comes from an idea I had, sometimes from a client request. Sometimes it comes from an observation. Take our make-up: at first, it got a chilly reception. 'How could a serious brand like Clarins get into something so trivial?' The comments weren't pretty; neither from the journalists or even our own teams. I didn't think this was fair. A delegation from our Japanese subsidiary made a special trip over to discuss this, and they didn't waste any time asking the question: 'Why make-up? It's stupid. It's not us, it's not Clarins. We thought you didn't like gadget products. How can you worry about color when what you care most about is treatment?'"

"I took some time to gather my thoughts and after a long silence I said, 'Up to now, we have done everything so that women could have the most beautiful skin possible. Unfortunately or, fortunately-women use make-up. Would you rather they use the competition's products to highlight the extraordinary skin we've helped them obtain? How unfair! Why let the other guy get the credit? Worse! Let him ruin the wonderful results we've worked so hard for? I for one certainly do not want women putting any-old product on the radiant skin Clarins has given them. It's our job-Clarins's job to do the highlighting. Plus, there's an obvious bonus in all this: thanks to our philosophy, thanks to our moisturizing ingredients, our make-up will double as treatment!'"

"The Japanese bowed and said, 'We were right to come. Please forgive us, but it was worth the trip.'"



"There was something else, Jacques Courtin continues. "Something more serious. One day I went to the institute to say hello to a very loyal friend and client. I got there just when she did, as she was parking. We said hello, she went in for her treatment, and she came

out just as I was leaving too. She seemed to be looking at something on her car and she was staring at it. I got closer. She said, 'Do you believe this? I parked here an hour ago. The car's fresh out of the carwash. It was sparkling. Look what it looks like now!' She swept her hand over it and her fingers came up all gray with dust and dirty. I immediately thought of her skin and of what pollution does to it. How could I, who takes such meticulous care of women's skin with products I hope are the best in the world, I who devote myself so totally to making their skin beautiful to look at and to touch, how could I stand by and let pollution spoil all that?

"Make-up is the last product a woman applies. It's in contact with the air; it gets bombarded by pollution. So what do you do just give up and admit defeat; accept that this mix of dust and aggressive, toxic particles sabotages all our efforts? No. You create anti-pollution make-up. That's what we did. It doubles as protection-the last rampart against pollution."



After Clarins blazes the trail, the competition of course rushes in. However, at the time pollution is not yet on everybody's mind. "We had to start from scratch," Lionel de Benetti explains. "Pollution was here, there and everywhere, but no one saw it or wanted to see it. In any case, no one cared about it as Jacques Courtin did. We had to analyze it all its mechanisms-and discover the ways it harms the skin. That was the way we could come up with antidotes."



"It's true that the first collection of Clarins make-up didn't move the Earth in terms of originality," Christian Courtin explains. "But that wasn't the point. Back then, we weren't looking for fashion or extravagance. We simply wanted to give women a shield. We stuck to the most popular colors in order to satisfy a majority of women. Since then we've learned we can also surprise, astonish and

captivate. We've blended in sensuality."

When it was launched, Clarins make-up did not sell as well as we had hoped. "We were ahead of our time, but that's not an excuse," Christian Courtin continues. "Pollution is the second biggest external factor in aging and it was perfectly legitimate and justified to focus our marketing message on that. But we went about it in an awkward way: in reference to what Prince Agha Khan did for the Alp'Action association we chose the butterfly as our emblem. The butterfly is a fragile witness to the quality of the air we breathe. It's the very symbol of colors that never fade. We thought this was an excellent choice. It turned out to be horrendous because we blew up the image we used an oversized butterfly and instead of seeing this dazzling, airborne creature, women saw a frightening insect."

"I thought the packaging didn't matter," Jacques Courtin adds. "That what mattered, as with treatment products, were the contents, not the container. I made a mistake. It was totally our fault. Make-up wasn't our strong suit to begin with. We were wrong to think women expected from the same things from make-up as they did from treatments. A lipstick is primarily a color. After that, it's an elegant object you should be proud to use in public. Then, and only then, is it something that's good for your lips. We had put excellent lipsticks, formulated practically like treatment products, in tubes more suited to lip balm-they were too neutral and drab. We've since learned our lesson; our lipsticks are now true, elegant jewels that you love to take out of your handbag. And we're more attuned to color, more in line with what's in style."

"We've evolved, but we haven't changed" Christian Courtin makes clear. "We're true to our beliefs, and the need to fight pollution is one of them. We're now on the fourth generation of our anti-pollution complex-it's in all our day creams. We've been battling pollution for years, repeating and repeating the message of it harms the skin. No one is as adamant about this."



"The products themselves aren't everything," Jacques Courtin says. "Give my make-up remover to a woman who doesn't know my methods, her results won't be as good. Removing make-up shouldn't traumatize the skin. You absolutely should not rub, because that creases the skin, distends it. It stretches and goes slack. That's on top of pollution, which is already attacking and scuffing it.

Yet another anecdote shows a Jacques Courtin on constant alert, drawing conclusions from whatever he can in order to hone his knowledge of treatment: "I had been to my optician's. He saw me wipe my glasses with a little chamois skin, and stopped me: 'For Heaven's sake, don't do that, don't rub! You don't realize, but your lenses are covered with particles of pollution. All you're doing is rubbing them in-you're scratching your glasses!'"

Jacques Courtin goes back to the office and has this confirmed. "Not only were my lenses in fact covered with pollution and scratched but we saw under the microscope that many of the particles were in the shape of which sticks to our skin. Can you imagine what someone's prisms, which means acute angles. That same pollution, face looks like after a whole day in town? It's the same as my glasses: when you rub, pollution makes these micronicks. You're under insidious assault day after day. Your skin becomes more sensitive.

"So I developed our method from this unusual observation-how essential it is not to rub when taking off make-up. You put the make-up-remover lotion on your face with your palms out flat, and then you immediately lift your hands away, as if your skin were burning hot. This is the suctioncup effect, to loosen impurities. This is of course detailed in the instructions. My products are always packaged with instructions where I make a point of giving useful information-this can sometimes represent a considerable technical problem, considering the number of languages. To say nothing of the cost-but I don't care; if a product or method requires information, you have to provide it.



No better example of this than the Contouring Facial Lift, a leading Clarins product whose instructions leaflet includes so many details and pages, it could be printed as a book-size manual!

"It was crucial to do this," Jacques Courtin explains. "The product was inspired by some Japanese women in Paris. By nature, Japanese women have round faces, round cheeks, that tend to get pasty and heavy when they age. They wanted a product to refine their facial contours. At first, the request surprised me, and then it grabbed my interest: no one had ever thought about refining the face. Finally, the idea took on a life of its own. Our Asian clients got us underway, but we wound up realizing that the results of our research would appeal to a great number of women around the world-and shake up the anti-age market.

"In most cases, when you alleviate the weight that pushes onto and pulls at your face's skin you refine its features and make it look younger. Think of jowls, double chins, stretched skin with deposits of excess fatty tissue. In other words, the basis of any anti-age treatment is getting which are furrows between two thicknesses; if you get rid of the heaviness. That also lets you diminish wrinkles, of the mass, or reduce it, the furrow disappears as well the wrinkle smoothes over.

"On the other hand, for faces that become hollow with age, I'd only recommend products that lift and fill out."



Dermatologist Catherine Bombal, head of scientific communication at Clarins since 1995, helped Jacques Courtin develop the Contouring Facial Lift, and its instructions. "Working on this project gave me a first-hand view of Monsieur Courtin's thirst for knowledge. An immense, insatiable thirst. You have nothing but respect for him when you witness this. Monsieur Courtin wanted to

know everything, absorb every morsel of scientific and medical knowledge related to beauty."

The observations that sparked the product idea are indisputable. "Look toward the sky," Jacques Courtin suggests. "Then stay in this position and look in a mirror: your skin has smoothed out, your features are refined and your face seems suddenly younger. There is a very simple reason for this: you've temporarily emptied your face of excess fat, and lymphatic matter that drains off impurities. Now look toward your feet and into your mirror at the same time: you seem ten years older than you are. The lymph is back.

"In fact, the substances that cause your face to age are mobile. As you age, firstly, your skin distends, and secondly, waste products accumulate, weighing down your features. To fight this double phenomenon we had to come up with double action: the action of a product and the action of applying it. That's the originality of the Contouring Facial Lift, a product that both drains, that is to say eliminates waste, and restructures, by tightening the skin. This is combined with an application method that speeds the elimination up."



To perfect this technique, Jacques Courtin set about learning everything there is to know about lymphatic drainage. "We bought every book available on the subject, the whole bibliography. Every anatomical chart," Catherine Bombal remembers. "And Jacques Courtin wanted to meet one of the biggest lymphology specialists in France. I set that meeting up with, of course, Dr. Olivier Courtin in attendance as well. It was fascinating everything he taught us, but also seeing Monsieur Courtin's curiosity working a mile a minute! He had to know and had to understand. He has this phenomenal ability to listen, and jumps on every piece of useful information."



"How much does the head weight," is one of the questions Jacques Courtin asked at the time.

"For lymphatic drainage, the weight and pressure of the drainer's hand are determining factors," he says. "If the hand presses too heavily it compresses the tissues; not heavily enough, it has no effect. But with just the right weight, it squeezes the tissues at the pressure needed to get the lymph circulating and eliminates impurities and surplus."

Where the face is concerned, successful drainage is strongly connected to the weight of the patient's head. When you sleep, your face is used to and accommodates this weight as you settle into your pillow; a massaging hand of equal weight will thus likely not harm it. "It's not easy to measure how much a head weighs," Catherine Bombal says. "You have the weight of the brain added to all the bones, liquids and tissues. As usual, we used a scale. And doing this project together was really exciting: he took advantage of my dermatological experience and from him I learned to talk in less complicated terms-to talk to the consumer, using the words she uses."



Months of research went into the Contouring Facial Lift instruction manual. "All women should learn this application technique. It is very easy and fast, two minutes morning and night. I discovered it too late otherwise I would look 20 years younger!" Jacques Courtin jokes. "But all kidding aside, if you start this early in life, squeezing out the excess, your face is going to stay younger longer. That's how you keep it from weighing down, from 'hanging.' The technique works without the product. And of course the product works without the technique. Putting them together is perfect! In any case, it's never too soon to start using Contouring Facial Lift. And never too late, either.

Vera Strubi, president of Thierry Mugler Perfumes, adds the final note on the subject: "The self-massage movements, the product-I

didn't know beauty treatment well enough to believe this would work. Jacques Courtin convinced me to try it. He's so sure of himself, you can't say no. Well...it's spectacular. And it's become a reflex. I do it morning and night, without even thinking about it. It's like brushing your teeth: at the beginning you have to force yourself but it quickly becomes a habit-a good habit!"

"That's absolutely true," Jacques Courtin adds. "Beauty is a question of using commonsense products and applying them correctly, every day. So many people wonder what's made Clarins so successful. The secret is to observe, analyze, and find appropriate solutions. Often, because we go farther than others, these solutions are different. They often open new research paths. That was the first to describe. Same for the make-up removing method case with weight-loss treatments, and the capiton we were we invented; for the face-scrubs whose merits we brought to light; the Eau Dynamisante that no one before us had ever thought of; and our anti-pollution make-up, which helps neutralize that insidious, age-inducing deterioration. This is the Clarins 'plus.' In everything."

Even in perfume?

19.

"Clarins always does things differently."

Even in perfume.

Didier Grumbach, president of Thierry Mugler Couture, initiated the meeting with Clarins at the beginning of the '90s. "He said only Clarins was capable of creating a perfume for Thierry Mugler," Christian Courtin remembers. I very much liked Mugler's menswear fashions: closefitting cuts, snap-closed shirts, geometric neckties. I wore his clothes a long before our paths crossed. On the other hand, his women's look didn't a priori match the image of the Clarins woman. He has a particular concept of women: provocative, very seductive almost overly so, to the point of extravagance. But Didier Grumbach seemed to have sensed that we would preserve the Mugler spirit and authenticity, that we respected Mugler's creativity and that-here's where history bore us out we'd dare to do things in a special way.

In 1992, following a signed agreement between Thierry Mugler and Clarins, Angel perfume sees the light of day.

"Vera Strubi had shepherded Montana, the first haute couture designer perfume," Christian Courtin says. "That adventure was a big success so we thought of her for Mugler. The Mugler world is a world apart. It's glamorous and magical. We wanted to respect his universe. We let him run with his dreams."



Dreams, which were sometimes difficult to fulfill... "From the beginning, Thierry had the shape of a star in mind, and we pulled it off. At first, the bottle weighed almost two pounds! It had to be lightened, brought down to a reasonable weight of just under a pound, without changing the spirit. We agreed to go with a very expensive bottle; we wanted it to be exceptional because we knew that at this price, we could really make something genuine, and even luxurious. The luxury market had been accepting compromise. It had allowed itself to slide toward plastic. We didn't want that. On the other hand, the weight of the glass bothered us with our culture of common sense, we worried a lot about this kind of wastefulness. So that's where the inspiration for refills came from. You bring your star-bottle to a perfume shop and get it refilled. This idea, so distinct to Angel by Mugler, so tied in to his universe, so characteristic of a star, in reality comes from the Clarins culture!"



As for the contents of the bottle, Mugler was again fortunate to have his ideas heeded. "He had also done some thinking about the perfume itself: childhood memories, country fairs, and pleasant aromas, cotton candy: appetizing odors up until then very new to perfume. We pushed the limits with this fragrance and came up with something that made everybody react: you either adored it 100 percent or didn't want to go near it. Some perfume specialists warned us about a scent, which was so particular, so specific, with such different opinions swirling around it; they said we had to be crazy to take a risk like that, given the cost of a launch.

"Clarins philosophy to the rescue! This was where the combination of Serge Rosinoer's experience and my father's good sense proved crucial. Making a perfume just to have another fragrance on the shelves was of no interest to us. As my father says, Clarins always does things differently, and here too we chose to break from the mainstream. We decided that, after all, you can't please everyone, and that a perfume born at the heart of Clarins had either to be outstanding or not exist at all."



Angel is launched. It sees a tentative beginning and then...blazing success. Its fans made it number one in France, and it is now among the world's top ten sellers.

"If a perfume is too elementary, it's doomed," Christian Courtin continues. "The worst thing you can say about a perfume is, 'It smells good.' No more, no less. No character. We stood up to the overcautious and we went out on another limb because, on top of everything else, Angel is blue-unique as far as perfumes go. When it was time to launch the product, Lorraine Bolloré found the best way to describe it: 'the first gourmand perfume.' If you've smelled it once, you going to recognize it. When you love it, you love it completely, and you're faithful to it for a long time.

"So for Angel, we took all the risks: a bottle that cost ten times more than a traditional one; a unique, groundbreaking scent; the color blue. Brands have their own deeprooted cultures. When they accept each other's differences and join forces it can be very productive."



It must be added that the Clarins philosophy of "doing things differently" influenced not only Angel's creation but also the manner in which it greeted its consumers: from the day of its launch,

Angel's packaging has contained... a client card.

"It's not exactly a feedback card," Vera Strubi says. "Let's say it's more of a message for people buying this perfume. I have to say that Clarins's experience with feedback cards inspired us a lot. Since this perfume is truly different, since its users are real devotees and are really attached to it-which touches us deeply, by the way-little by little, we created a kind of club whose members are quite simply women who wear Angel. The perfume has become a sign of recognition, a rallying point. This way, every time we have a new project we survey our users on this or that detail and they always answer with remarkable enthusiasm. Many even write to us spontaneously; they send poems, stories, novellas-whatever Angel inspires them."

Fourteen years after its launch, Angel has proved that boldness is a virtue. "In terms of turnover it's the number one French perfume. It has incredible loyalty and a strong impact. As far as we know, certain women who left it at some point to try something else have come back to it with great pleasure. Angel is among the ten bestselling perfumes in the world, alongside the likes of Chanel N°5."

Thierry Mugler Perfumes is not the only fragrance company to make the current Clarins Group president proud. "The Azzaro brand is also part of the group," Christian Courtin explains. "Azzaro for Men is number three in France and among the ten top-selling men's fragrances in the world. Through Azzaro for Men, we inherited a Latin-lover image, and the ad slogan was terrific: 'A fragrance for men who love women who love men.' Our next step was to reinvent the brand."

"Clarins is a company fueled by enormous loyalty," explains Gérard Delcour, president of Azzaro Perfumes. Not so much in writing but very much by oral agreement. Absolute trust. Azzaro comes out of a couture house founded at the end of the '60s by Louis Azzaro, well known for his fabulous evening dresses and yet the brand's biggest success has come from its men's fragrances. Azzaro for Men remains a great classic that has never fallen from grace and has always been a bestseller. I was at Azzaro during its first years and came back in 1994. Clarins distributed us in Italy and we distributed them in Canada. When Azzaro was put up for sale in 1995, Clarins made an offer and to my greatest satisfaction, it was accepted. This was the beginning of a very beautiful story."

The merger takes place quietly and synergies start to develop. Good ideas make the rounds.

"We created the 100% Azzaro for Men Club, directly inspired by the group's philosophy. But aside from these broad ground-rules, we're of course very vigilant about cultivating and preserving the identity of our brands."



"For Chrome, in 2000, our influence led to a family-oriented ad," Christian Courtin explains. "Three generations: a man, his father, his son. Very touching and moving. It was well received and really stood out. Family is a value we believe in. Clarins revolutionized sun product ads by being the first to dare show a woman and child at a time when the preference was for a naked girl relaxing on a beach. We photographed a mother, in a big hat, with her daughter. The image made a considerable impression on people and probably helped put Clarins sun products on top. Today Chrome is in a strong position and rises regularly in statistics. We think it'll join the front of the pack very soon."

"We had to keep building," Gérard Delcour says. "So Visit for Men was born: less Latin lover, less ladies' man, and more romantic and passionate than Azzaro for Men. Then we made Visit for Women."



"Perfume is not the stuff of logic like treatment products are," Christian Courtin says. "Of course skin characteristics differ from one continent to another but a day cream is still a day cream. For perfume, everything varies according to culture. In the United States after women's lib, perfumes had to smell 'good and clean.' Floral fragrances became industry leaders. For Mugler's second women's fragrance, we wanted to interest women who were attracted to the Mugler world but found Angel too strong. Let's just say that after the 'black angel' we needed a 'white angel.' That's how we came up with Innocent.



After the success in women's fragrance, Mugler Perfumes wanted to reach out to men. "From the start," Vera Strubi explains, "we knew we needed a men's fragrance. This was essential if we wanted our perfume company to last. We also knew we would have to uphold the same values as for Angel: a daring scent, a sophisticated bottle and of course the indispensable bond with consumers. We began talking to Thierry Mugler and asked what he liked when he was young. He immediately described '60s comic strips, with their half-man/ half-god heroes."

A, as in Angel, plus men : A*men is launched in 1997. Faithful to the brand's philosophy, A*men is refillable: within its metal "armor," the star-graced flask can be refilled indefinitely. The fragrance gradually makes its mark, raising itself to 9th place in the market: a remarkable achievement for such a distinctive, and voluntarily opiniondividing, scent.

In 2003 B*men makes its entrance, completing, no doubt temporarily, the dream-cast of players in this fragranced adventure. Of the same lineage as its predecessor, but easier to wear, its imaginative scent offers woody base notes with middle green notes. It is effusive, elegant and very masculine. As of September 2004, it

has been the second-best seller in France.



Another surprising hero of this saga, the unconventional Cologne Mugler positions Mugler in an unexpected place. "From the start of our business relationship, Thierry Mugler wanted to create a cologne. Once the classic fragrances were well established we forged ahead. The wish list we gave to the perfumer was simple: the smell of white linen, washed with Marseille soap, drying in the sun. More childhood memories-an fragrance that everyone in France has smelled at least once. Very pure, very refined sensuality with an exquisite sensitivity. We worked on this cologne as if it were perfume, not an eau de toilette. Today it has met its public and conquered its fans: people who don't like fragrance but still want to smell clean. A scent of cleanliness has been reinvented in a sophisticated, subtle way. Mugler Cologne wearers also are very faithful. It's a scent for you-that you don't want to give up once you've discovered it, and that you make your own."



"But perfumes at Clarins haven't always been synonymous with success. We even had a raging failure." Christian Courtin acknowledges. "It was called Elysium, in reference to the 'paradise of plants,' and I doubt anyone even remembers its name. I have to say it was aimed at the American market. It was 1995 and the United States was the first country in which our products were sold exclusively in department stores. To stay competitive and round out our newly launched line of treatment products and make-up, it had become crucial to offer American women a Clarins perfume. We'd developed a scent we all agreed on-probably a bit too simplistic on reflection. It was a pretty, floral fragrance, but lacking in character. All the specialists were telling us that the American woman doesn't like very strong fragrance. We let them convince us and we were wrong. You can't please everyone. You have to know how to stand

your ground. What proof do we have? Because of its originality, Thierry Mugler's Angel was badly received at first in certain countries and today, it's number four worldwide, whereas Elysium, because of its discretion, seemed to have something for everybody, but no longer exists.



"But Mugler gave us some headaches too," Christian Courtin remembers. "With couture! Our involvement in Thierry Mugler Perfumes was enough for us. We had 34 percent and that was plenty. We were in fact too involved not to react when certain institutional investors wanted to sell and get out. The fragrance success justified our confidence in the brand and in the talent of its designer. We couldn't let just anybody sit at our table, or go off whoknows-where with the brand. We couldn't leave the field open to the highest bidder. So we were forced, morally, to buy all of Thierry Mugler-including the couture. That's when I found out couture is a specialty all of its own-but not ours. It was an expensive lesson to learn but one that bore fruit because today I realize that if we're going to diversify it has to be in the industry we know. As full owner of Mugler, we decided to consign the fashions, eyewear and certain accessories to licensees in those spheres all the while, of course, keeping control over what is created. We won't take even the slightest of financial risks every again."

20.

"Give Life Beautifully"

Angel is just about celebrating its very first victories when Olivier Courtin officially joins the Clarins team in 1994, exactly 40 years after his father founded the brand.

"Clarins was always a part of my life," he says. "I was born with it and surrounded by it. When I was about ten, I knew my father had a beauty treatment center, that he worked with doctors, that he used products. For me, this was no big deal except that there were loads of products around the house, and I could use as much cream and bubble bath as I wanted. But back then, very few people had heard about Clarins."



Olivier enters adolescence just as Clarins is beginning to make a name for itself. "Everything really started in the middle of my student years, in the '80s. Clarins was getting bigger and bigger. I didn't talk about it around me I never mentioned that I was 'the son of Clarins.' Out of discretion, I made sure to hide that. My fellow med-school students worked nights as nurses to earn some pocket money. I did too, not for the money but out of curiosity, in order to learn. More than anything else, I didn't want to be different from the others, and I wanted to lead the same kind of life they did."



Jacques Courtin could not finish his studies because of the war. Olivier sees his through to the end. He does so brilliantly and starts his career as a highly regarded and appreciated orthopedic surgeon in one of the big hospitals in the Paris area. "They used to be called physical-medicine doctors," Jacques Courtin says. "Olivier operated at Hôpital Foch. And when his boss, Professor Troizier, had to go away for several months he would ask Olivier to replace him!"

"Without actually saying so, my father convinced me that medicine was an extraordinary calling," Olivier says. "He was very interested in sports medicine. Many of his friends were doctors. Thanks to him, we had always lived in a medical milieu-he was totally part of that world. As a child, I was aware that he 'took care of people' and when I got older, I realized how much he would have loved to finish his degree. Nevertheless, my father never pressured me to go to medical school. You can't say he didn't influence me, either... Let's just say it was taken for granted: he wanted one of his sons to be a doctor, Christian wasn't, so it naturally was up to me. But I'm sure that if I hadn't wanted this for myself, he wouldn't have insisted. I liked math a lot and nature studies. The taste for medicine crept up on me little by little. That said, even when I was at school I knew, I felt, that one day, inevitably, I would wind up working for Clarins. That I'd come back to my roots..."



However, you couldn't just snap your fingers and suddenly change careers. "When I made my decision, I wanted to do things right. I was doctor. I had no idea how businesses worked. I could have been parachuted right away into an executive position but I preferred to go back have to school: Essec Management, with a major in Management and Finance. I graduated in 1994, and was fully ready for Clarins. At the beginning, we did things progressively: I worked part-time and learned all about Clarins stages. Then one day I just dove in head first, quite suddenly. It's funny, but as soon as my

leaving party was over, I never went back to Hôpital Foch even though I'd worked there my entire career, and I'd always loved being a doctor, and felt very comfortable there, very happy. Yet I left it all from one day to the next, practically without regret. Clarins feels like it's where I belong. What I like here is that we look at problems and try to solve them logically-but always based on 'listening first.' In this field, as in medicine, listening is crucial."

"My dream came true," Jacques Courtin says proudly. "To Christian I gave the world. And to Olivier, the human being. A perfect distribution."



"I loved being a doctor," Olivier Courtin repeats. "I adored my practice. Orthopedics is very gratifying. You really act. You repair. You relieve. But of course Clarins was never far from my mind, especially since I'd always read a lot about skin. If I didn't become a dermatologist, it's doubtless because sick skin doesn't interest me, and in dermatology you dispense care but you don't always cure. Back when I was in school, in any case, and had to choose a specialty, I knew there were very few therapeutic responses for even acne. On the other hand, I was always fascinated by healthy skin-how to help make it even better, how to ensure its well-being. When patients came to see me, I couldn't help observing their skin. When they were easy to talk to, I asked questions. I even went as far as giving advice, and after that, they'd often bring up the subject again, on their own, telling me what happened when they followed it. I developed a vitamin-based preparation that they could order at a pharmacy and that they were all very pleased with I guess, in a way, that was competition for my father..."



Newly arrived at Clarins, Olivier Courtin turns his thoughts back to his vitamin-based preparation. "The Clarins motto is: 'First, do no

harm.' That is, at least don't provoke any side effects. In medicine, the orders are 'Cure first and foremost with the fewest possible side effects.'

"Here I was confronted with a new way of thinking, and initially it was hard to come to terms with the limits imposed on me, the limits inherent to cosmetology. Cosmetic products are not supposed to penetrate the skin-they have to remain on the surface; otherwise, they're considered medications. I had to learn to stay within our domain: beauty products. At the beginning, I spent some time at the lab in Pontoise. I took my vitamin cream and saw how far I could go with it. It became the Clarins Energizing Morning Cream, and it does very well, in every sense of the term."



"When I started at Clarins, my father was in the fullswing of writing his book *Donner la vie en beauté*. I took great pleasure in working on it with him. It is very well written, very useful, conceived with all the elements that make him who he is: practicality, accessibility, everyday common sense. And the subject it deals with is far too rarely broached between obstetricians and their patients: a women's beauty preand post-pregnancy."

Donner la vie en beauté is a veritable beauty lesson, describing month by month all the stages of pregnancy solely in terms of a woman's beauty. It is given to anyone who asks for it wherever Clarins products are sold and 1.5 million copies in six languages have by now been printed.

"I got the idea when Christian was born," Jacques Courtin explains. "Giving birth is one of the most important moments in a women's life. Malou gave birth to Christian bathed in happiness but I saw that none of the books about pregnancy and childbirth had anything to say about the woman herself. How-to preserve her body, how to stay beautiful before, during and after pregnancy... As soon as I could, I wrote this book. Then I went over it with my doctor-son Olivier. Today it is of great service to many mothers and

one of the things I'm most proud of. We give it out for free for me that's a way of thanking all the women responsible for my success."



Of course, early on, Olivier Courtin is also asked to give some thought to developing new massage techniques now used throughout the world.

"That didn't mean doing things differently from my father; what he's always done is good, and I don't think it needs to be improved. On the other hand, I was asked to concentrate on aspects he had never had a chance to address: an after-flight massage of the head and certain areas of the face, for instance, to eliminate jet lag. After-sports treatment that helps muscles recuperate. I even had the idea of developing an after-sun treatment, with a very gentle technique."

However, Olivier Courtin does not restrict himself to the realm of his natural calling: the scientific aspect of beauty treatment. He does indeed give opinions on the products, checks their usage instructions and suggests all round innovations, but he has come to Clarins as a manager, not a medical consultant.

"Clarins today is a group. Its future is of great interest to me. I want to contribute to its development. All this gave me the idea of teaming up with L'Occitane."



Olivier Courtin meets Reinold Geiger in private during a trip to the mountains, and immediately admires his athletic prowess: a skilled skier, he has even been short listed for the Olympics. After much success in cosmetics packaging, Reinold Geiger has just purchased L'Occitane, at the time a small company making natural personal care products in Provence and distributing them through approximately 50 boutiques in France.

"I was impressed by his company-15 percent profitability only a year after opening a point of sale. L'Occitane was already amazing everyone and he was looking for partners so he could grow. We studied the possibility-and grabbed it!"

At present, L'Occitane en Provence's has 550 of its own boutiques in the world of which 200 are in Asia-for a turnover of 230 million euros. Its association with Clarins has surpassed expectations: "At first it was supposed to be only a financial investment," Reinold Geiger says. "But in reality our relationship with Clarins is very fruitful. As an outside observer, I'd always admired the company. Its success is rooted in its products and its products are rooted in Jacques Courtin's ideas. I watched Clarins develop but I never imagined I would get to know it close-up. One day they said, 'If you want, we can share our expertise with you.' They opened their lab to me-I met Lionel de Benetti, a very unassuming, approachable man. We develop some formulas with them now and have them test others... It's a very enriching, stimulating partnership.



"Recently," Olivier Courtin says, "we had the idea of opening a new kind of Clarins point-of-sale, with an on-site institute: a kind of 'window boutique' where women could discover our world in a single visit. Given L'Occitane's experience in this area, we naturally tuned to them. It was Pierre Milet's idea, but it went without saying."

In New York, the first exclusive Clarins boutique opens in 2004 on Madison Avenue. The next one opens in Soho the following year. "We designed the space as a way of recreating the Clarins world in its very essence," Olivier Courtin continues. "It's fresh, warm, accessible as well as being dignified and elegant. It is contemporary but not cold or intimidating. Wood, natural materials, plants. Our products are there of course but also treatment cubicles for women and men. What we're looking to do is have people come into a state of mind. And it's apparently working. These are very welcoming

spaces, attracting lots of customers-they're experiencing Clarins under the most pleasant circumstances."



Olivier Courtin's 1994 arrival at Clarins is accompanied by another change: the Neuilly headquarters has to be enlarged once again.

"When we moved to Neuilly," Roland Broussard says, "we thought it'd be big enough for a long while for generations, even! But very soon we had to expand. We began by taking over some offices on Rue Madeleine Michelis in Neuilly but that wasn't enough. In 1993 we found an ideal building, also in Neuilly, on Rue Commandant Pilot, and started renovations; the façade had metallic cladding done by a rather well known architect but which didn't suit Clarins's image at all."

The Pontoise site is no longer large enough either. In 2000, the entire executive team goes to Amiens to inaugurate the new Clarins site for warehouse, packing and worldwide-shipping operations.

"I have many more ideas," Olivier Courtin says. "We don't stop growing and soon we'll need other sites. I'm already working on a big project."



Patrick Bizot has big projects too. Appointed Clarins president in 2000, he sees a bright future opening before him.

"Clarins means constancy and coherence. Fifty years of doggedness paying off. It started as a little dinghy and has become a flagship. From a French business that did some exporting, we now have a full-fledged global company. All these years without deviating from one obsession: considering the client. When our founding strategy is applied to the letter-advice, kindness and, yet again, the client-

everything works like a charm.

"Thoughtfulness, humility, spontaneity, a smile: these are values that have defined Monsieur Courtin's life. It's a state of mind that can be found throughout the company, on every level. The brand inspires trust and gives confidence. It is an endearing brand, and one that owes everything, or near enough, to its founder. When Monsieur Courtin has an idea he expresses it-then just as quickly says, 'But I could be wrong.'

"I've worked in a lot of major companies in the biggest French cosmetics group but one of the most touching compliments of my life came from a Clarins international trainer who said: 'You are Clarins.' To be Clarins, well...it must be said that Jacques Courtin paved the way for us. He has great curiosity and writes everything down. He has a clear vision of his brand and the values he wants to transmit. He's persistent in what he thinks and what he says, and has exceptional intuition. And he has taught me how to be obsessive about the client. That is Clarins's signature. Efficiency and pleasure for the client."

21.

"Charity begins when it deprives you."

The Prix de la Femme Dynamisante³¹ was born in 1997 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Eau Dynamisante. It was supposed to be a one-time event.

"The first one was tremendous," Isabelle Fromager remembers. "It was stimulating, moving. The idea came to us after we met Doctor Christine Janin, the first French woman to scale Mount Everest. We had asked if she would try one of our products in the extreme conditions of a climb, and she told us about her association, Everest for Everyone. We wanted to help her. The Prix de la Femme Dynamisante came about with her for her, really to recognize this exceptional woman who strives to give hope and dignity to sick children. Her association allows them to leave their hospital rooms for made-to-measure mountaineering classes. After the ceremony was over, we thought that that was the end of it, but several months later when I happened to run into Monsieur Courtin near the elevator he asked one of his typically intriguing questions: 'Well, who will it be this year?'

"I asked, 'Who will who be?'

"He said, 'This year's Femme Dynamisante-have you given it any thought?'

"And it turned into a yearly phenomenon!"



"But that's not all. To start with, we gave a check to Christine Janin's association. That was what the award consisted of. Then Monsieur Courtin said, 'That's nice and everything, but what happens after that-how can we help her continue her work?' So it was decided that every year we'd not only choose a new recipient but also give a new check to each of the former recipients of the Prix de la Femme Dynamisante."

They all have one thing in common: they come to the aid of children. "That's natural," Jacques Courtin says. "At Clarins we take care of mostly women. For a woman, what's more treasured than giving life? Our priority has to be to help unfortunate children."



The 1998 recipient was Marie-Claire Noah for Enfants de la Terre. In 1999, Doctor Francine Leca for Mécénat Chirurgie Cardiaque-Enfants du Monde.

Sister Emmanuelle received the award in 2000 for Asmaé. "There was a lunch in Monsieur Courtin's office," Isabelle Fromager says, "because before accepting, Sister Emmanuelle wanted to find out about the people giving it to her. That day she was, as always, direct, generous...and intractable. She needed to be sure the good intentions of the Clarins family were real and sincere. Monsieur Courtin and she got along well come to think of it, they kind of have the same temperament, and they share a 'sense of common sense.'

"The ceremony was very touching but also very funny. Everyone remembers that circle-dance she did with Monsieur Courtin, Christian and Olivier after dragging them on stage with her. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry! There were initial speeches, of course, and then we asked her to say a couple words. She said, 'Very well. All these pretty speeches. But the check,' she asked

impishly, 'where is it? Because it's with money, not words, that I can help my kids.'

Such frankness-needless to say, everyone broke out laughing. Then she opened the envelope, looked at the check, and started counting out loud: 'One, two, three, four, five, six...A six-figure check... Well! I haven't seen a check this big for a long time. There are going to be some very happy children!' That evening it was us, at Clarins, who felt like we'd had an award."



After Christine Lehot in 2001 for the Méharées association's work with schools around the world, the 2002 honor went to journalist Marine Jacquemin in recognition of Collectif Enfants Afghans's efforts to build a women-andchildren's hospital in Kabul. "The Prix de la Femme Dynamisante," Marine Jacquemin says, "is not only a check even if it's a hefty check, and, even more amazing, one that keeps coming every year. It's more the chance to speak with very attentive, accessible people interested in what you're doing. This is the most beautiful award I've ever received."

An extremely active supporter of Collectif Enfants Afghans, actress Muriel Robin adds, "When I was young I wanted to be Jesus. I thought I'd been sent in his place. That's a huge job, you know. I remember thinking that. As time went by I managed to accept the idea I'd probably not be saving the world...the world is a tad large, but you can always do your part with a little drop in the ocean."



It was Céline Charloux in 2003 for the P'tits Cracks, which works on behalf of sick children, then writer Catherine Enjolet the following year. "My organization, Parrains Par'mille, has been in existence since 1990," Catherine Enjolet explains. "It matches up socially or emotionally troubled children and adolescents with men and

women willing to give them some time and affection. This is a terrific way of helping the kids stay with their families, rather than being taken away to an institution. We think of it as a very useful, efficient prevention tool against delinquency, and failure at school. The Clarins award came at a crucial moment for us: we were running out of money and had to start scaling back. In fact, in all our years of operation we've never received any kind of grant. This was recognition-it gave us the confidence to keep going."



The ceremony was attended by author Daniel Picouly, loved and respected by thousands of readers. "For two reasons, I'm glad Catherine got this award. First, because it made me think of my mother. I was lucky enough to have one of the most motivating mothers. I'm the eleventh out of thirteen children and my mother had cosmetology down to a science: every morning, despite the number of us running around-to say nothing of the nephews, who were there too we each got a dollop of cream on our skin. Now, I admit it wasn't Clarins, which proves my mother wasn't perfect...but every morning we went out with a little drop of softness on us. For us, this was really the cosmetics of happiness.

"The other reason has to do with the Little Dutch Hero. Like Muriel Robin, I wanted to be Jesus. But since after a while I had to tone down my ambitions, I decided to become the Little Dutch Hero. The Little Dutch Hero lived in a village at the foot of a dike. His parents said to him, 'If one day you see a hole in the dike, put your finger in it and yell.' At first the boy didn't understand why this would matter, and his parents explained, 'A little hole in the dike might some day become a big hole. And a big hole might some day cause the dike to break. With this small gesture you might be preventing a big catastrophe. I would like to see the Little Dutch Hero become the patron saint of this Clarins award. It's the supreme ambition for all of us to be at least the Little Dutch Hero, since we can't be Jesus..."

In 2005, Laurence Ligier received the award for Caméléon, an

organization that helps victims of child abuse in the Philippines.

But Jacques Courtin did not have to wait for the Prix de la Femme Dynamisante to show that he had a heart of gold. "When we were at Rue Tronchet, I had a client with a handicapped child. His condition touched me and moved me. My father always said, 'Charity begins when it deprives you.' That thought is always with me. At the time, I didn't have a lot of money but I had to do something. I'd heard about the Marie-Hélène association that helps severely handicapped people, and for the past 40 years I've been supporting them. They were of great help to my client and her child."

In the middle of the 1970s, his wife learns that she has an extreme form of polyarthrititis. "What I most admire in my wife is her courage, her strength, her struggle against despair. She has endured terrible, permanent pain all these years and has had, among others, seven operations under her belt alone. Her medication has severely weakened her skin-it can hardly be touched. She is a martyr to her illness."

Everybody recognizes the affectionate devotion Jacques Courtin shows her. "There's never a reproach, never a complaint. When I'm at the office, she's basically alone all day-so I really want to be there with her in the evenings and on weekends. After all, she's always there for

me, by my side, from the beginning. From the beginning of Clarins. She has always been next to me, in every sense of the word and sometimes ahead of me, with her good sense, her frankness and her understanding of human nature. She's always had trust in me and my success. Support at home is fundamental. If only women knew

how important their encouragement is... Malou thinks straight and speaks clearly. She says what's on her mind. When you say what's true calmly, serenely, even if you don't always say particularly nice things-you never hurt anyone. I like this in her."



A condition that strikes more women than men, polyarthritis gradually eats away at the joints, provoking unbearable pain.

"During an appointment at Hôpital Bichat, a rheumatologist whispered, 'If your wife can't tolerate this medication I don't know what else to give her, because there is nothing else.' This disease is a challenge to pharmacology. When I contacted the Pasteur Institute, one of the directors, Françoise Russo-Marie, told me, 'Right now, most of our research is in AIDS. If you want us to look at polyarthritis you have to set up an association.' She let me know how to get in touch with Denis Bloch, whose son has the same condition, and she said, 'If you and he and other families with a polyarthritic patient can raise enough money I can contact interested researchers and we can work toward coming up with treatments.'"

Thanks to this remarkable woman, in 1989 I founded ARP, the Association for Research on Polyarthritis. As do all the doctors and researchers involved, she deserves much heartfelt gratitude."



A scientific committee is created. Doctors come on board. "Monsieur Courtin could have been satisfied with just taking care of his wife," says Nathalie Bordier, his assistant at the time. "He certainly had the means to get her the best doctors in the best hospitals. But this association became essential for him; he never gave up, no matter how hard it was, no matter how indifferent people were. He always bounced back. He created the association discretely; it wasn't for his

image or for the company. He believed that if all the patients and especially all the families were mobilized, there would be more money and more research for this disease. It's a beautiful way of going about things. Honest and determined, Monsieur Courtin has this contagious passion for getting involved. He got me interested, made me want to be involved too. There are other things in life besides yourself, like donating a little time, a little money. We had some great moments with ARP-I could almost say thrilling. He's a man of convictions who goes all the way. Thanks to him, everyone associated with ARP realized that this wasn't only about doctors or a disease, but about the patients who are suffering and waiting."



Nathalie Bordier remembers the association's successive steps: "When ARP was created, Hôpital Cochin had been waiting two or three years for funds to buy certain diagnostic equipment. Monsieur Courtin's first gesture was to finance the association so these machines could be bought immediately. Next, ARP underwrote research projects for new medication that today stops the progression of the disease by 80 percent-without, however, curing it. Once a year, there's an event where polyarthritis researchers present their projects to each other, and the association selects the ones worthy of further funding."

"I've seen nine associate professors among the best-volunteer their precious time on a Saturday evening to discuss the choice of projects," Jacques Courtin says. "I take my hat off to them, as to all the doctors who have helped us. So far we've conducted research on more than 400 subjects."



"From the start, Denis Bloch and I decided we'd personally cover all of ARP's operating expenses," he continues. "That means donations go 100 percent to research. Companies and individuals have the

right to a tax exemption of 66 percent of their gift. I consider this not a right but a duty. By reimbursing donors via tax reduction, the State is indirectly participating in our work. I've told our suppliers about this arrangement and many of them are very happy to help."

"Monsieur Courtin supports a whole list of associations he considers worthy," Nathalie Bordier adds. "No one knows about this, and I'm certainly not going to go into detail. The very first time he got involved in one of these it was way before ARP-he asked himself, 'Why do I want to do this?' And I think he answered, 'Because I know someone who was really helped by them.' After that, he decided to give to others too. Sometimes he says, 'You can't help everyone. There are a thousand ways to help. Well, let's at least do it where life takes us, and shows us the way.'"

"I don't like it when Clarins is called a 'corporate citizen'," Jacques Courtin says. "Citizen means paying your taxes and obeying the law. As far as I'm concerned, Clarins is a human citizen. It takes care of fellow human beings, women and men. We work in the interest of beauty, health and happiness. If some women are less fortunate than others, it's our duty to help them. The money we have comes from women; if we can give some of it back so they can be healthier, this is a gift for us. When I was young, at catechism there was a sentence written onto a ceiling beam: 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' I have not gained the whole world, but I hope I've not lost my soul."

The next chapters

...

"Clarins's strength is its women."

Clarins is 50 years old.

And what now?

Jacques.

Christian and Olivier.

And why not soon Virginie, Prisca, Jenna and Claire?

"I don't want people to think that it took two men to replace my father and four women to replace my brother and me," Christian jokes.

Virginie, Prisca, Jenna and Claire are Jacques Courtin's granddaughters.

"Virginie is my oldest," Christian says, "and the oldest of the four. She's finishing business school and has already done several internships with us. I know she is already very excited about Clarins-and why not? With Olivier's twins, Prisca and Jenna, and

my second daughter, Claire, you have to admit that would be one heck of a team! In any case, we're getting ready for them. I have two dreams for Clarins: that when someone buys a Clarins product she can say, 'The richest woman in the world couldn't buy a better product than this' and that women of all ages continue to want to use our brand.

"We just launched a line for men that got off to a very good start: after only one year of existence we're number two in France. There are almost as many men as women, so there's great potential out there. We have boutiques about to open around the world. Olivier is working on improving our products and methods, and he's writing a book on beauty.

"And now? Let's keep on going!"



Keep on going as close to women as possible, with them everywhere even where Clarins never imagined itself. Clarins women have changed and the company has been able to keep up with them, adapt, remain at their disposal, grow with them, as well as open up to new horizons. In the spirit of top customer relations, Clarins reaches out to meet them in all aspects of their lives.

"Women travel a lot now," explains Isabelle Herbreteau, director of the travel retail division, which manages distribution in airports. We couldn't abandon them just as they were leaving routine behind to seek adventure! At first, we thought we'd be dealing with impulse purchases or a last-minute errand because they forgot to pack something. Then we realized our clients like to buy our products in airports. The trip, the escape, Clarins-all those pleasures at once. Today nearly one in ten Clarins products are bought in an airport perfume shop."



As Clarins gains momentum, Christian and Olivier, partly inspired by the past, can write the next chapters.

"I'm giving them my experience," Jacques Courtin explains, "and a solid foundation. But I'm especially giving them a way of looking at things: Clarins's strength is its clients. Our success comes from respecting them and listening to them. We have very good products. But what would the products be without our clients? Our feedback cards have allowed us to endlessly improve and perfect what we offer. You could say that this way, our products are constantly being tested. More than that, thanks to the feedback cards, we've created a veritable after-sales service for beauty products, the only one of its kind in the industry. We engage long-term dialogue with all the women who buy our products. Out of about 500 contacts per day, 80 percent are compliments, twelve percent information requests and only eight percent criticism-to which we respond within a maximum of 48 hours."



Before starting to think about perfume, Clarins first sought the advice of women. "To get a better idea of their perceptions of Clarins and their expectations about perfume we sent our clients a questionnaire," explains customer service manager Caroline Piquet. I've been here only two years and I must say I was stunned by the answers we got. First, by the number we received: 611 out of 1000 questionnaires sent a return of 61.1 percent! When I was in school at HEC, our teachers talked about a good rate of return starting at ten percent. These massive numbers show how attached women are to Clarins. For them, it's a unique brand, which is close to them.

"I was also struck by their words: according to our clients, Clarins's products are of high quality, effective, affordable and a good mix of science and nature. They see the brand as professional yet warm, convivial and attentive. Other adjectives we have seen include sincere, honest, simple yet refined, respectful of its users.

"We enjoy this privileged relationship all year long, with clients

often sending us things like marriage and birth announcements and news of other landmark events in their lives. They say, 'Clarins is like a friend,' and every day I realize how right they are." To leaf through the results of this poll is to realize all that Jacques Courtin has brought to the field of beauty care. Pages chosen at random say, "No other brand is as close to women," "With Clarins, you're always a special client, no matter how many millions of us there are," "At Clarins, beauty knows how to be serious without taking itself seriously," "It's a prestigious brand but doesn't look down its nose at you," "Clarins means the best products and the best advice to make women even more beautiful"...



"Today there's not a single women's magazine that doesn't have a beauty section," Jacques Courtin says. "Women are well informed. But they still ask questions about their own particular cases when they buy a product. That's why we're important. As does Clarins, women know that beauty is vital for self-confidence, equilibrium...happiness. When you're giving advice to a woman, you shouldn't think of her as a client but as a human being who wants answers about subjects that occupy her thoughts and sometimes even preoccupy. I'd like each beauty adviser to speak to each woman as if she were a friend or relative, to give her advice about our products like she'd do with her mother or sister. Women deserve this kind of respect. How can we make overblown promises? How can we take advantage of women's vulnerability? Beauty taken seriously is a form of therapy, and it's like health: you must deal with it selflessly. In any case, the beauty industry has made so much progress that Clarins doesn't have to exaggerate about its products; the actual results speak for themselves.

So why lie? That only wastes time and energy-better to devote all our efforts to improving. Today I'm as touched as ever to see how attached women are to Clarins. I'm happy to know they think of us as a brand that listens to them and helps them and loves them. Loves them. Never forget: everything Clarins does it does par amour-out of love."



We have come full circle. In the spring of 2005 Clarins's first perfume is born. It's no surprise that it bears the name Par Amour.

"Just as we were putting the final touches on this product," Jacques Courtin says, "we received a letter that basically said, 'Your products make us love them by their perfume, for their perfume. Why don't you create a perfume to make us women loved?' We took that as a sign, a sign that we were on the right path."

And when Jacques Courtin speaks about his perfume, he is in fact speaking, passionately, about Clarins's history: "Clarins is women. It's a story of love and trust, for a lifetime of beauty. Visible beauty that makes you love life and that makes you happy. Clarins, women and beauty is a story of happiness. Clarins brings you happiness. It is a story of immediate well-being and long-lasting youth. It is about being beautiful and feeling beautiful, being attractive and feeling loved. In a word: 'being'. Being one's self, in the eyes of others, in the eyes of the other.

"The route from beauty products to perfume is like the trace a woman leaves behind as she slips by you in a room. The memory of her scent is unforgettable. This is the slipstream of love: the love of women, the love of beauty. A perfume that makes you feel loved? We know the secretour products are living proof. A perfume that no one forgets, that leaves its trace behind: light, fresh, discrete but faithful and ever-present. A perfume of love: Par amour of women, by Clarins. Forever par amour, for their beauty..."



"Thirty years ago," Jacques Courtin concludes, "after top marks in business school, Christian preferred traveling to working. I answered, 'OK. I happen to have a seat for a round-the-world trip in beauty. You know our motto: Do more, do better, enjoy what you do. To do better you have to know what the others are doing. And

in every domain: type of distribution system, star products, institute-based treatments, trends, ads.' Thus, the world was given to Christian: the infinitely wide world of beauty for him to discover...

"As for Olivier, he was fascinated by science, and fittingly chose a career in medicine and more specifically, orthopedics-the most appropriate way of marrying health and esthetics in the infinitely complex human being. What a wonderful balance between my two sons' interests, and one that came about naturally, in line with their respective tastes. Christian has unquestionable talent as a manager; he's the best worldwide ambassador for the brand and its products. Olivier, with his specialized background, is the best spokesperson for the Clarins philosophy: beauty taken seriously. This is better than I could ever have imagined, even in my dreams. Each of them is stronger than me in his field. So think what they'll represent together! Then there are my four granddaughters, whose turn is coming, and who I hope will also learn that it doesn't even feel like work when you devote yourself to creating...A Beautiful Success."

Conclusion

"At times this book flies in the face of preconceived notions in relation to work, amongst other things. Today people try to limit work as much as possible. But work is a joy, an activity that gives value to an individual. Athletes pursue value through physical exploits. We can find success by applying ourselves to our jobs.

Our jobs done with love.

Loving what we do... Or doing what we love.

Loving our fellow human beings completely.

In my opinion, the greatest shortcoming is contempt.

Contempt from those on whom life has smiled toward those on whom it hasn't.

Loving our fellow human beings and respecting them: even politicians should give this some thought. The day politicians have the courage to speak well of their opponents or rather of those whose ideas are different from theirs (...and are they really so different?), life will be easier for everyone; it will be easier and more beautiful.

A more beautiful life.

Trying to do good, do good via the beautiful. Beauty is important: it can help make us happy.

I have spent my life improving beauty... and beauty has improved me.

I am happy...

Happy about what I have been able to give.

That is happiness: giving it to others.

Jacques Courtin

January 2006

Photo Album



1937. In Monaco with my mother and my
sister Geneviève.
Looking to the future...



1960. With my two sons Christian and Olivier.
The future already pulling at the present.



1965. With my father Lucien Courtin.
A man of good sense. Kindness personified.

[illegible]

**Pour retrouver
un visage jeune,
suivez les flèches.**

Les femmes les plus lumineuses
sont celles qui ont
le visage qui leur sourit.
Et qui ont le teint éclatant
d'une jeunesse saine.
Mais il y a un petit
jeu à jouer pour ça.

Il faut que l'éclat
soit en harmonie avec
la douceur de la peau.
C'est pourquoi il faut
appliquer avec douceur
un produit qui agit
sur la peau sans l'irriter.
C'est la seule façon
d'obtenir un visage
qui sourit.

Eclat 1.5 Micro-essence
L'unique
sérum
sans alcool
pour un
visage lumineux
et doux.

CLARINS

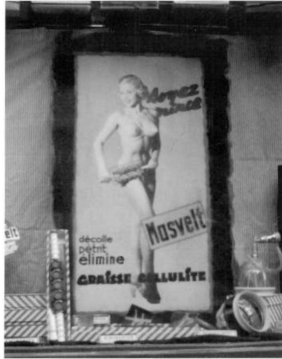
Aut. Min. San. 7502



1980. Surrounded by my team—some of whom are still at Clarins.



1986. In-service training in Neuilly. Explaining is good; demonstrating is better.



Aimée Almont, the famous model, posing in a bathing suit for the first time, for my first massage device.

1970. Pulsed air demonstration on Rue Tronchet.
I was in fact selling air—for a most effective massage.





1977. With my son Christian. I was already asking his advice.



With Serge Rosinoer A man of great merit.



With my sister Geneviève.
She gave me my first loan.
I owe her a lot...
I was able to repay it all!



1980. At a Florida inn with Malou.
Always together, always a team, always in love.
I like this photo very much.



1954. Madame Courtin and
her nephew Jean Ruinet.
Christian Courtin is in



The whole family.
Everything unites us: respect, affection, love.



With my four granddaughters.
A beauty contest already...



2002. In Ramatuelle.
Two sons, four beautiful granddaughters: Prisca, Claire, Jenna, Virginie.
The future is in place...



2001. With Sister Emmanuelle and Dr. Olivier Courtin, Prix de la Femme Dynamisante award.
An example of efficient kindness.



Clarinsmen: the winning trio.

In memory of Malou

*Malou passed away whilst
this book was being written.*

*"On Sunday February 21,
2005, my wife was taken in
a near-coma to Hôpital
Pompidou in Paris.*

*She left us on March 18,
never having regained
consciousness.*

I was not able to say adieu."

Jacques Courtin

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